Leo Strauss

Vico (1963)

A course offered in the autumn quarter, 1963

The Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

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Editor's Introduction

Introduction to Leo Strauss's 1963 Seminar on Giambattista Vico

Wayne Ambler

As one would expect of a course by Strauss, the following transcript makes considerable demands on the reader. It ranges widely over such texts, authors, and issues as the Bible, Spinoza, Homer, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Machiavelli's treatment of Livy and indirectly of the Bible, traditional teachings on natural right and natural law, and much more. As we will see momentarily, Strauss justifies his teaching of this course on the basis of his interest in the origins of historicism. Hence, comments on the radical historicists are relatively rare while ones on natural right, natural law, and the break between ancients and moderns are more frequent. But most frequent of all, of course, are detailed comments on particular passages drawn from two challenging works by Giambattista Vico,[i] a Neapolitan philosopher who wrote after Locke and just before Montesquieu. After highlighting the problem of history in his general introduction to the course (session 1), Strauss insists that the seminar take up Vico's two works as they present themselves, without trying to fit them into any preconceived plan of the general unfolding of modern Western thought (session 2). Apart from a brief exception at the beginning of session 9, when Strauss returns to the reasons he decided to study Vico in greater earnest, both Strauss and his students adhere to this stricture.

In addition to its intellectual demands, the transcript also demands forbearance, for the audiofiles are in bad condition. Sessions 8 and 16 are missing altogether, and readers will encounter ellipses that indicate "inaudible words" both often and at moments of special importance. Garbled readings from Vico's text are easy enough to correct, but Strauss's exchanges with his students, which make up more than half of the remainder, are often unintelligible.
Strauss's long life of thought, which yielded such rich results from its wide-ranging studies, honored Vico by devoting a course to him; but Strauss turned to him late and did not dwell on him thereafter. He never published any part of a work devoted to Vico and did not refer to him often. So far as I have seen, at least, he mentioned Vico in only one letter and only two publications.[ii] Accordingly, Strauss presents himself in the class as an investigator, not as one who has unlocked the secrets of Vico's work. Hence in the beginning of the ninth session he sketches seven issues that would have to be addressed carefully in a more serious study of Vico: he presents them not as accomplished but as goals his seminar will not achieve. [iii] And a minor

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[i] *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico,* trans. Max Fisch and Thomas Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1944), and *The New Science of Giambattista Vico,* trans. Thomas Bergin and Max Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948).

[ii] I am very grateful to Svetozar Minkov for having called my attention to two of these references. The transcripts of several courses Strauss taught after this one also include a few brief references to Vico. As far as I have seen, they all mention him only in passing and always in ways that are in full accord with what he has to say in this course.

[iii] This list of seven issues offers a good way to investigate the course as a whole, and it served as the basis for my earlier report on this course: "On Strauss on Vico: A Report on Leo Strauss's Course on Giambattista Vico," *Interpretation* 36 (2009): 165-88.

sign that he is just recently coming to Vico is that he often says, with a touch of wonder, that he finds some part or aspect of the assigned reading to be "strange," a judgment from which few new readers of Vico will dissent. If we must for these and other reasons be wary of taking this transcript to represent Strauss's final or unqualified view of Vico, we here get a rare or, I think, unique opportunity to see Strauss beginning to study a thinker seriously at almost the same time as he introduces that thinker to his students.

What concerns us most is Strauss's thought, but the transcript also shows the care with which he undertook his scholarly and teaching responsibilities. For all of his cautions that he is a newcomer to Vico, Strauss shows a good grip on Vico's Italian. (His study of Machiavelli surely helped in this regard, but Vico's Italian is more difficult in both syntax and vocabulary.) He also appears to have studied Nicolini's extensive notes,[iv] to have read carefully Croce's study of Vico,[v] and to have familiarized himself with more recent Vico scholarship. These achievements are minor, at least for Strauss, but they become remarkable when one considers that he was at the same time working on the Thucydides chapter of *City and Man* and beginning to work on *Socrates and Aristophanes*, among other studies.[vi] Indirectly, then, his course on Vico offers impressive evidence of Strauss's seriousness in treating even a thinker who was not central to his most ambitious projects.

Strauss's most important published mention of Vico occurs in his "Preface to the 7th Impression (1971)" of *Natural Right and History*.[vii] Its second paragraph begins as follows:

> Since the time when I wrote the book [*Natural Right and History*], I have, I believe, deepened my understanding of "natural right and history." This applies in the first place to "modern natural right." My view was confirmed by the study of Vico's *La scienza nuova seconda* which is devoted to a reconsideration of natural right and which is not properly approached and understood by those who take "the historical consciousness" for granted. Since I have not written anything on Vico, I can refer the interested reader only to what I wrote in the meantime on Hobbes and Locke. . . .

Strauss then indicates that the articles in question, both written after *Natural Right and History* but well before his course on Vico, are those that have been republished in *What is Political*

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http://www.interpretationjournal.com/backissues.php. Since this introduction is based on Strauss's letter to Benardete and enjoys the benefit of a better version of the course transcript, it will complement rather than repeat the earlier one.

[iv] Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova*, ed. Fausto Nicolini, 2 vols. (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1928).

[v] Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. R. G. Collingwood (New York: Russell & Russell, 1913).

[vi] Strauss's letters to Seth Benardete show best how much he then had on his mind, but a review of his bibliography serves the same purpose. See either https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/strausss-publications or, for a bibliography arranged by year, Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 249-258.

[vii] Strauss also notes Collingwood's use of Vico in "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History," *Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 572. Strauss, however, does not pause here to discuss Vico but argues that Collingwood should have also studied "Vico's source," Hobbes.

Philosophy?[viii] He thus invites the reader to study these articles on Hobbes and Locke to see how he deepened the understanding he conveyed in *Natural Right and History*. While he says his view of modern natural right was *confirmed* by his study of Vico, its *deepening* appears to have occurred prior to this study.

As for the letter in which Strauss refers to Vico, it is extraordinary. Addressed to Seth Benardete on November 19, 1963, it summarizes in two paragraphs "the gist of [his] observations" on the two courses he was just about to finish teaching. We must pass over his rich remarks on his course on the *Gorgias*, but since the second paragraph offers such an excellent but highly compressed overview of the Vico course, I will use it as a guide for the remarks that follow. Since Strauss's letter has not yet been published, I quote in full the paragraph on Vico.

> [I] I read Vico because I had hoped that he had developed more fully than Lessing the outlines of a wise understanding of Homer; this hope has been disappointed: he is, as he is held to be, the father of F.A. Wolf etc. [II] But, he belongs to the great and good men. [a] The discovery of the true Homer (central Book of the work) deals also with the Bible implicitly. Above all, Iliad : Odyssey = OT : NT (the two books cannot have the same author). The theme of the Iliad is anger and wrath, that of the Odyssey an effeminate morality (Circe, Calypso and the like), in a word: love. His implicit analysis of OT and NT is greatly indebted to Machiavelli (all the implications which I have stated or to which I have alluded in my book on Machiavelli can be assumed to have been fully clear to Vico) and Boccaccio. [b] He has seen the key importance of the characterization of the "first men" as Polyphemuses as indicated in Laws III. [c] The overall idea: the only philosophic theology is that supplied by the study of "the world of nations" ([ix]as distinguished from the "world of nature", for Newton etc had done their work) where we find the utterly selfish individuals work nevertheless toward the common good (the common good is the unintended result of the individuals' selfishness); no human but only divine providence can explain that; in brief Vico's providence is A. Smith's Invisible hand. [d] His peculiarity: infinitely repetitious, appearance of pedantic antiquarianism running wild (quotes all the time the long forgotten celebrities of the 16th and 17th centuries), frequent misquoting even of his own statements. I began to see light when [e] I observed that while he speaks all the time of "golden sayings" of various writers, he speaks only twice of golden sayings of Moses and in both cases Moses speaks of non-Jewish matters, and there are only two mentions of Jesus. [f] The implicit references to biblical matters abound (just one example: the weapon of the French royal house consists of lilies, but "lilies do not spin", ergo: the law salic; in the context it becomes clear that the NT belongs to the heroic age, i.e. the prerational age). [g] If you wish to get an impression of Vico, look at his autobiography, English translation paperback, page 155 end of the paragraph and beginning of the next one. As ever, Yours, LS

[viii] Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), chap. 7 ("On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy") and chap. 8 ("Locke's Doctrine of Natural Law").

[ix] I have entered exactly what Strauss typed with these exceptions: the left parenthesis to which this note is attached is a quotation mark in the original, I corrected typos in "peculiarity" and "consists," and I added the numbers and letters in brackets to make it easier to refer to parts of the letter.

Strauss's first sentence reports that he turned to Vico in search of a wise understanding of Homer but that his hopes were disappointed [I]. The reason for his disappointment is explained more fully in the last recorded session of the course, which took place soon after he wrote his letter. After noting that he holds some "unsayable" opinions about Homer, he tells his students:

> And then I observed Vico had written a part of his book called "The Discovery of the True Homer," and therefore I expected to find something of this kind in Vico. This was the reason why I was originally interested in Vico, and this of course was barking up the wrong tree entirely [laughter] because Vico has nothing to do with this kind of thing; but on the other hand, it was a great surprise to me when I started it. Impressive, really (session 17).

Strauss states frankly to both Benardete and his class that he learned nothing from Vico about Homer, but it is striking that his criticism of Vico's way of reading Homer is as restrained as it is. Vico read Homer's epics as documents compiled over centuries and important primarily for the evidence they offer about the early ages of man or about a "folk mind" (session 13 on 809[x]). Strauss notes that Vico's approach to Homer caught on, that it was advanced by the F. A. Wolf he mentions in the letter, and that this won Vico one of his "titles to fame in the ordinary historiography." Nevertheless, Strauss clearly sides in this matter with J. A. Scott, who "dared to say there was one poet Homer who composed both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*" (session 13). For students who might be interested in this issue he recommends a short but powerful address by Nietzsche, which also includes a criticism of Wolf and hence indirectly of Vico[xi] (session 13). Nevertheless, Strauss goes about his business of trying to understand Vico, whose book he calls "impressive" and whom he places "among the good and great men." He does not pause to develop an attack on the way of reading Homer that Vico helped to popularize and that remains influential to this day.

In contrast with the letter to Benardete, Strauss explains in the beginning of the course that he has decided to study Vico to deepen his understanding of the problem of history. As he puts it:

> But I think the time has now come for me to study Vico. Now, where does he come in on the basis of what I, for instance, happen to know? I think one can give a very simple answer: The problem of history. (session 1)

It appears from the context of this remark that his disappointed hope to learn from Vico how to read Homer preceded by some time his decision to teach this course. He had apparently concluded at some earlier date that he already knew enough about of Vico's way of reading Homer from his studies of Spinoza's way of reading the Bible, so he directed his considerable powers elsewhere. When he returned to Vico, his concern was with the problem of history, and this is the subject of his most extended remarks (sessions 1 and 9).

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[x] References to *The New Science* are by paragraph; paragraph numbers were added by Nicolini and are the same in most Italian and English editions. References to the *Autobiography* are by page number to the Fisch and Bergin translation.

[xi] "Homer and Classical Philology," which is available in translation at http://www.perpustakaan.depkeu.go.id/FOLDEREBOOK/Project%20Gutenberg%20(Friedrich%20Nietzsche).pdf

That Strauss does not mention historicism in his letter to Benardete may indicate both that his addressee was already well versed in Strauss's thoughts on this issue and that, at least as of the writing of the letter, Strauss did not think that reading Vico had substantially changed his understanding of it. As he says in the preface to *Natural Right and History*, quoted above, he conveys his deepened understanding of natural right and history in essays on Hobbes and Locke, not Vico. It is also possible that he chose to emphasize the problem of history for the benefit of his students, but it is refreshing that Strauss's explicit statements refer to what he thinks he needs to understand better, not to the presumed professional needs of his graduate students.

Strauss's review of the problem of history is located in sessions 1 and 9. His remarks are broadly similar to those in his published works, such as his essays in chapter 1 of *Natural Right and History* and chapter 2 of *What is Political Philosophy?* With regard to the transcripts made available by the Leo Strauss Center, the stated theme of the course on Vico ties it closely with the course on "Historicism and Modern Relativism" (winter 1956), though this course never so much as mentions Vico's name. The course on the *Gorgias* (autumn 1963), taught in the same term as the one on Vico, also includes a statement on historicism in its first session. There are differences among these various statements on historicism, but his remarks in the Vico course are in general keeping with his other accounts. As he also does elsewhere, for example, Strauss here traces the origins of the historical approach to the conservative school that arose in the wake of the French Revolution,[xii] and he mentions Ernst Troeltsch and Oswald Spengler as having contributed to its advance (or as clear evidence of it). His wide-ranging remarks here stress more the background of historicism than its culmination in radical historicism: St. Thomas and the requirements of traditional natural law are more in focus than Heidegger (who is, however, mentioned briefly in session 9), and he here stresses Kant's "epoch-making" thought as a necessary condition of historicism (session 1).

There are some differences in tone, however, for his comments here describe historicism without stressing either its dangers or its vulnerabilities. As he says, "I was not interested now in suggesting any criticism of historicism, only that we understand what it means" (session 1). One will not read here that historicism is "*the* serious antagonist to political philosophy," for example,[xiii] or that "[o]ne cannot understand the meaning of the attack on natural right in the name of history before one has realized the utter irrelevance of the argument."[xiv] Still, Strauss alludes to the difficulties he stresses elsewhere, as when he says the following:

> Doctrines are functions of times. So we have then replaced chaos by order [by tracing conflicting ideas to the epochs in which they arise], but naturally at a very heavy price, because if this is taken as I have stated it, it means there cannot be the true political philosophy, true for all times, since every doctrine will be relative to its time (session 1).

It is perhaps worth noting that he here evaluates the "heavy price" in terms of political philosophy, not natural right, but my more general point is that Strauss's primary goal here is to

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[xii] Compare *What is Political Philosophy?*, 60-61 and session 1. However, the former source is quick to criticize this school while the latter never does so.
[xiii] As one does in *What is Political Philosophy?*, 26. The emphasis is mine.
[xiv] See the very first half of the first paragraph on historicism in *Natural Right and History*, 9.

state clearly and with power the historical point of view, not to assess it.[xv] Here is an example of him explaining the case for historicism with some sympathy:

> The thing which escapes us most is the air which we breathe, which is, as you know, invisible, and therefore we can easily miss it [students laugh]. We look through it, as it were, to the door and other things, but we do not observe the air. But this air through which we see is in a way more important than anything which we see through it because it determines our way of seeing things (session 1).

So for whatever reasons, Strauss's letter to Benardete neglects to mention what he emphasizes to his students, namely, the important connection between Vico and historicism. But after telling Benardete that he did not find in Vico the outlines of a wise understanding of Homer, Strauss adds: "But he belongs to the great and good men." Strauss looks past one of Vico's limitations to make a case on his behalf. The remainder of his letter sketches this case.

The first point on which Strauss commends Vico is clear [a], but Strauss develops it further in his course: Vico managed the delicate task of commenting on the Old and New Testaments and criticizing especially the latter by speaking of Homer as he did. The most important passages in this regard occur toward the end of session 14, where one can see suggestions similar to those he makes to Benardete. Vico's sharp contrast between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, even to the point of insisting that they were written or assembled in fundamentally different ages, is intended to call attention to the differences between the Bible's two testaments. As in the letter, Strauss in the course ties Vico's mention of "wrath" in the *Iliad* to the wrath of the Old Testament and implies that love is more characteristic of the New Testament. Strauss roots his remarks especially in paragraphs 866, 868, 879, and 880 of *The New Science*.

To see in greater detail how Strauss reads Vico's treatment of Homer, consider a difficult passage from session 12 on paragraph 879. First Vico stresses the pronounced differences between the two epics; then he says "the divine Plato" tries unsuccessfully to reconcile them. Strauss may hint that Vico here gives Plato this epithet because he will use him here to represent religious orthodoxy; then he comments as follows:

> Vico says Plato solves the difficulty concerning the relation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by saying that Homer had foreseen the times of Odysseus. Yes. In other words, Plato tries to show that there is one author of the works. I think he intends to assert the fundamental harmony between the two testaments—the prophecies of the Old Testament pointing to Jesus, according to the Christian interpretation. Now what can he mean by the fact that the morality of the New Testament should be inferior to that of the Old? . . . But the old story, which was said by quite a few people—I mean of the anti-Biblical writers—[is] that the morality of the New Testament is less political, in that sense softer, than that of the Old Testament.

[xv] Another brief reminder of Strauss's critique of historicism is the following from session 9: "For me historicism has become a problem and, therefore, realizing that it is a problem, I saw that the most direct alternative to history is natural right."

I take Strauss to mean that Vico uses the divine Plato as a model of the orthodox Christian reading of the two testaments, which treats one as being anticipated by and fulfilling the other. Indeed, Vico says of this divine author that he had declared "that Homer had foreseen by inspiration" the customs of the later epic, which he characterizes as "nauseating, morbid, and dissolute" (879). In contrast to the view that tries to bring harmony between these very different poems, Vico himself asserts here and elsewhere the unbridgeable gap between them. Accordingly, Vico goes on to attack the reading of Homer he attributes to Plato as one that "merely made of Homer a stupid founder of Greek civility" (879). By criticizing the view that the customs of Homer's two epics can be reconciled, Vico is able to imply a then-impermissible teaching on the Bible's two testaments: this is the point Strauss stresses in his letter to Benardete.

Had Strauss's letter included more than a paragraph on Vico, it might have added that he came to see in Vico's treatment of "the three princes" a similarly clever way of challenging the Catholic natural law tradition. (Vico refers to Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf as "the three princes of natural right" [329]). As his reading of Homer was indirectly his reading of the Bible, so his critique of the three princes, who were Protestants and hence easily open to criticism by a Roman Catholic author, was indirectly his critique of the whole tradition of natural law, including St. Thomas (sessions 3 and 9). Arguments against lesser lights may apply to greater ones as well. As Vico put it at one point, the three princes based their thought on "the authority of the learned" when they ought to have based it on "the authority of the human race," but the princes were not alone in being guided by this learned tradition (350). When considering Vico's possible indirectness, it helps to remember that the Inquisition was active in Naples throughout his life and that several of his acquaintances were brought to trial (*Autobiography* pp. 11-12, 34-36).

In his letter, Strauss presents Vico as being indebted to Machiavelli for his indirect analysis of the two testaments, and adds that—at least in this regard—Vico "can be assumed" to have seen all that Strauss had stated or implied in his recently published book on Machiavelli. In the course, however, Strauss does not declare so flatly that Vico is quite this subtle a reader of Machiavelli. Perhaps for easily understood reasons, Vico rarely mentions Machiavelli in *The New Science*[xvi]; but Strauss refers to him often. He usually does so, however, to show the depth of the "realistic" element in Vico's thought, not to show that Vico appreciated the most subtle or refined points of Machiavelli's teaching. Strauss usually presents Machiavelli's possible influence on Vico as similar to that of Tacitus and Thucydides: they are realists who view history without illusions. Like other authors, perhaps, Vico used Tacitus as a more acceptable substitute for Machiavelli (session 1 on "*tacitismo*"), but I do not see that Strauss tries to show in the course that Vico read Machiavelli with the same care that he himself did. Strauss does not explicitly trace Vico's analysis of the two testaments to Machiavelli; and although Strauss occasionally refers to some aspect of his own radical reading of Machiavelli, he does not develop or identify such a reading in Vico. It is also noteworthy that in the course Strauss never calls Vico's writing "esoteric." He even shows a certain strictness about the meaning of the term when he corrects the Bergin and Fisch translation for their use of it. (Strauss defends "recondite" over the translators' "esoteric" for the Italian *riposta* in session 1) Although Strauss suggests that Vico's treatment of sensitive religious issues is careful and clever, the letter makes a stronger claim for him as a reader of Machiavelli than do the fifteen extant sessions of the course. And yet even in the letter he says his own stated and implied teaching on Machiavelli "can be assumed to

[xvi] I believe he does so only in paragraphs 1003 and 1109.

have been" fully clear to Vico; he does not say "can be shown to have been" fully clear to him. This is enough to keep alive the question of whether Strauss thought Vico's reading of Machiavelli fully anticipated his own.

The second point in Vico's favor in Strauss's letter is that he saw the "key importance" of "'the first men'" being characterized as Cyclopes as they are in Book III of the *Laws* [b]. In the transcript, Strauss pauses to argue that Plato teaches this view of savage human origins, though he also disguises it (session 5: contrast *Laws* 678d-e with 680a-681d). Nevertheless, he also admits Vico may have come to this view through Lucretius, whom Vico had studied carefully and who had an important following in Naples in Vico's day (*Autobiography*, pp. 126, 128, 130). But whatever its source, Vico makes the savagery of the first men, who really are not yet human, one of the main themes of *The New Science*, and this is of course important for Strauss. At least part of Strauss's interest in this theme is that it complicates the question of Vico's relationship to the biblical tradition and thus increases the rhetorical challenges that face him. While commenting on the importance of how one sees the origins, Strauss stresses that Vico's approach is part of "critical history," which is history without miracles. This links him with such others as Plato (again, in *Laws* III) and Thucydides (session 6).

Notwithstanding the link between Vico and *Laws* III, the course goes further than the letter by sketching a key difference between Vico and Plato in regard to the earliest human beings:

> For Plato it is clear that men were always reasoning beings. Perhaps on the basis of very poor data, and perhaps reasoning badly, but it was always reasoning. Whereas Vico in fact says that there was a stage when men had only sense, imagination and passion, and no reason; no universals. For Plato there can never have been mute human beings. That's impossible. For Vico there were such mute human beings. That is a fundamental difference. And, of course, [it is] also [a difference] from Aristotle (session 14).

This fundamental difference is of course tied to Vico's emphasis on history, on the fundamental differences that arise among human beings over time, but Strauss does not speak to the relative merits of these fundamentally opposed positions on whether speech is essential to man.

If Strauss's course does not assess this disagreement, however, it does bring out why the earliest men are so important for Vico's work. To put it simply, it is that their barbarism was undeniable: it included, of course, incest, parricide, and human sacrifice. Nevertheless, these early creatures were innocent of all crime, for they had no knowledge that anything they did was wrong. There was no inner voice telling them to love their neighbor or even to seek peace when it might be found. Not only this, but their barbaric actions somehow bore fruit over the long run, and eventually barbarism was left behind and a human age ensued. Owing to his frank focus on our brutish origins, Vico refuses to agree that there is an immutable or universal natural law or natural right. Rather, there is history.

The next point in Strauss's letter is especially difficult and seeks to capture "the overall idea" of Vico's work [c]. It reflects on the relationship between "'the world of nature'" and "'the world of nations,'" the effect of the scientific revolution on the possibility of natural or philosophic theology, and Vico's understanding of divine providence.

When Strauss says that "Newton etc. had done their work," he means, I think, that Newton and the other founders of the new natural science had made it impossible to base a philosophic theology on the world of nature. But why should the new natural science weaken or destroy the case for a theology based on nature? His most direct response in the course makes two points and does so more than once. One is that the modern view denies that nature is teleological, and this deprives nature of the purposes that might show it to be a moral or divine order; the other is that the modern view holds we can know only what we make. Since we do not make nature, we cannot understand it. We can use it, of course, to make our lives longer and more comfortable, but our use is possible even in the absence of knowledge of things in themselves. We do not so much discover the eternally true laws of nature as impose useful rules on it (sessions 1, 2, and especially 7 on paragraphs 341-46, 331, and 349). It appears the power of modern natural science is accompanied by, if not purchased at the price of, the view that nature is ultimately unknowable. Here is Strauss's most succinct formulation of this issue: "The only possible natural theology, i.e. philosophic theology, is the New Science. The traditional natural theology based on the cosmological or teleological argument is not valid, because we do not understand it" (session 7, on 346). Here, at least, our general lack of access to nature is the reason we cannot show it to be teleological and thus cannot develop and defend a theology derived from nature.

Although the founders of the new natural science made it impossible to discover a theology rooted in nature, a philosophic theology, Strauss reports that Vico discovers one in "'the world of nations.'" He does so by finding it natural that people in the earliest times created their own gods "through a certain natural instinct that man has for divinity" (*Autobiography* p. 167). Commenting on these lines, Strauss is even more emphatic about the novelty of Vico's approach to this issue:

> An amazing change in the meaning of natural theology. Natural theology is a rational teaching of God, and here the theology is natural in an entirely different sense because of its genesis in laws;[xvii] . . . it is natural only by virtue of its genesis, it has nothing to do with its truth. The ordinary meaning of natural theology is of course that it is a true teaching (session 17).

The traditional foundation for natural theology having been rejected, Vico finds a new one in "'the world of nations'" and, especially, the actions of people in the earliest times. Strauss might have said here what he says in another context, that Vico often preserves traditional categories but gives them new content (session 12 and *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* 183). As for the consequences of this transformation of natural theology—whether, for example, it also amounts to the abandonment of a position from which one could contend against revealed theology—Strauss leaves it at calling the change "amazing" without detailing its consequences.

[xvii] Strauss stresses more than once the novelty of Vico's view of natural theology and its genesis in the earliest and most barbaric period of 'human' life, but this is the only time he refers to a genesis in laws. Since laws in a strict sense would not have arisen in this early and barbaric period, this reference comes as a surprise. Strauss may have meant "laws" only in the very broad sense of emerging customs. It may also be that the transcript does not express his precise meaning. It is good to remember from time to time that the transcripts are not works published by Strauss himself.

In his letter to Benardete, Strauss links Vico's novel approach to natural theology to his novel view of divine providence (which is mentioned often both in the course and in *The New Science*). It operates in "'the world of nations,'" not in nature, as Strauss puts it here, so it is intelligible. To see this idea of providence one must first note that Vico divides history into three ages: that of the gods, that of the heroes, and that of human beings. Notwithstanding the charming sound of these labels, the first ages were unspeakably barbaric. Slowly, however, history unfolds and the horrors of the so-called age of the gods are attenuated. Families, laws, and eventually cities come into being. Life very slowly becomes human or humane. But why does this happen? Not because men come to their senses and write contracts to regulate their conduct and appoint sovereigns to enforce them, for the "men" of these early ages lacked the intellectual wherewithal to do any of this. Rather, their desperate, violent, shortsighted actions somehow result in small steps toward a better age for men in general. This "somehow" is Vico's divine providence, which Strauss likens to Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand." Needless to say, neither Vico nor Strauss ever denies that such general providence is fully compatible with the horrible suffering of particular individuals, and it does not depend upon the existence of a personal god.

Strauss's letter to Benardete does not pass over Vico's perceived peculiarities [d], though his list of such is longer in the course. He there notes from time to time characteristics he finds "strange," and he mentions more than once Vico's penchant for implausible etymologies (sessions 5, 9, 11, 13). Even Bergin and Fisch, Vico's devoted editors, compile their own list of oddities in *The New Science*, a list which they say could easily have been longer (xviii). Neither Bergin and Fisch nor Strauss attempt a full explanation of why Vico's work has all these peculiarities, though the remainder of Strauss's letter helps explain some of them.

Strauss's last three points [e, f, g] all concern the way Vico writes and help to explain his peculiarity. The three points Strauss mentions all happen to be part of Vico's effort to appear in conformity with the religious tradition when he was not. They thus are all related to his earlier statement about Vico's indirect way of treating the Old and New Testaments [a].

When quoting one passage or another, Vico will frequently identify it as "golden." Cicero, Strabo, Eusebius, for example, are all authors of golden passages. Strauss is impressed that for all Vico's stated or implied devotion to the Bible and the Catholicism, he only twice mentions Moses as the author of a golden saying (585, 601). Moreover, in neither passage is Moses speaking of his highest theme, the chosen people. Strauss grants that a complete absence of praise might be seen as rooted in the view that it would be impudent for an ordinary mortal to praise a holy text, but this cannot explain Vico's relative silence, for he implies such praise, but only on two occasions and on matters that are not the highest (session 12). This amounts to faint praise as regards what should be most important, and Vico's mere two references to Jesus reinforce the point (816, 948).[xviii] Along these same lines, Strauss contrasts Vico's high praise of Thucydides, whom he calls "a most acute and discerning writer," with his reserve in the case of Moses (session 12 on 645). Beyond the infrequency of Vico's references to Jesus, Strauss notes that in the very context of the first of them Vico explains how the early or poetic way of thinking would exaggerate the importance of, say, an Achilles. Early men even deified this hero; they made men into gods (just as they also turned, say, earthquakes into supernatural events, session 6

[xviii] By contrast, Vico mentions Jove well over one hundred times.

on 48, 50, 137). Vico does not say directly that this is the origin of Jesus's divinity, of course. He leaves it at saying only that Jesus was painted as being larger than life-size (session 14 on 816).

Strauss's letter adds to his case that Vico speaks of the Bible indirectly by citing Vico's reference to lilies as "the weapon of the French royal house." (The letter says "weapon" where we would say "arms" when referring to a coat of arms.) He explains the meaning of this biblical reference more fully in class (session 12 on 657). The phrase "Lilies do not spin" appears on the French arms, along with angels armed with spears, and Vico takes this to refer to the Salic Law, which excluded from the throne the sex associated not with the spear but with the distaff. But Vico also calls this phrase "heroic," and this is what Strauss mentions in his letter. If the reference to lilies is derived from the New Testament, and Matthew, 6:25-34 might indicate that it is, then Vico's comment would place the New Testament in the heroic age, a terrible and, as Strauss says, pre-rational time.

Strauss's discussion of this point in the course is brief and complicated. He does not compare this characterization of the New Testament with the earlier suggestion that Vico contrasted it with the more warlike spirit of the Old Testament. And immediately after suggesting that Vico may be placing the New Testament in the brutal heroic age, Strauss takes a step back:

> Now this is very interesting [but] I must say that *I have not found any evidence for that here*, if this is evidence at all. But I know this from Machiavelli, an author whom Vico knew very well indeed. Now this one can say is a major theme in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, as a whole, if not the most important theme (emphasis added).

He goes on in the immediate sequel to explain in four paragraphs how Machiavelli "demolishes" the authority of both Livy and the Bible. But his focus has shifted from Vico to Machiavelli, and when it shifts back, the point has changed. We are thus left to wonder whether the later writer fully grasped and accepted the subtle teaching of the earlier one. But perhaps Strauss's next point adds evidence that Vico is serious about assigning the New Testament to a barbaric age.

When Strauss returns to Vico, he notes that in Vico's scheme of the three ages (divine, heroic, and human) the cycle repeats itself. The Middle Ages are thus a return to the barbarism of the earlier heroic age. This could help to support Strauss's interpretation of the arms of the French royal house: not only was the New Testament written in the (barbaric) heroic age but the French coat of arms was also designed in the (barbaric) return of the heroic age. Nevertheless, Strauss's own focus is on a new point, and a very important one: that the return to the brutal heroic age is nonetheless very different from the original version, for the legacy of the intervening human age was not completely obliterated. For example, sophisticated scholasticism remained as a legacy of the human age, and thus the barbarism that returned was less severe than its earlier version (session 12). In the course, Vico's way of reading the Bible had to compete for attention with themes Strauss does not mention in the letter, and he cannot finish every discussion he begins.

Strauss's concluding remark in the letter refers Benardete to page 155 of the *Autobiography* [g]. It would be difficult to see what Strauss has in mind without the benefit of the transcript. The passage in question, which Strauss's reader, Mr. Reinken, reads for the group, has Vico describing his work on Grotius and his editor Gronovius; but Vico then adds that he "abandoned

the task, reflecting that it was not fitting for a man of Catholic faith to adorn with notes the work of a heretical author" (p. 155). What is noteworthy about this expression of Catholic piety? On Strauss's reading, the beginning of the next paragraph is designed in part to show how thin it is, for Vico here mentions his admiration for four authors "above all others." Who were these four authors? As becomes clear from the context, they are Plato, Tacitus, Bacon, and Grotius (pp. 154-55). But none of these authors were Catholic, and two were Protestant. So no sooner does Vico present himself as refusing to study a heretical author, Grotius, than he presents himself as admiring the Protestants Bacon and Grotius (again!) above all other authors. Strauss advises his students to put this on their list of funny passages (session 3), and mentions it to Benardete as representative of Vico's way of writing.

In these ways, then, Strauss introduces Benardete to his course on Vico. He does not try to summarize the main contours of *The New Science*, nor does he assess Vico's contribution to historicism. More strikingly, he does not dwell on his disagreements with Vico or on the latter's possible weaknesses. Rather, he presents a wonderfully condensed summary of "the overall idea" of Vico's work and a generous appraisal both of his way of writing and of his grasp of Machiavelli's subtleties. In placing Vico among "the great and good men," while acknowledging his "peculiarities," Strauss helps us all to do as he did and take Vico seriously. The generosity he shows Vico in the letter was evident also in the course, as when he tamed a student intent on attacking Vico. His taming took the form of teaching what he called, "*the* principle of criticism," which he identified as follows: "you must not slaughter [the author you are interpreting, even if he appears foolish]. You have to take him at his strengths" (session 3). His instruction of the student in this rule would not have been so successful with the group had Strauss's "slaughter" not brought forth laughter and had he himself not followed his rule so closely.

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss commenting on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and responding generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on Natural Right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Professor Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After Strauss retired from the University, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness.; and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then the administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and a grant from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The surviving audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript, which read: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were

encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director Nathan Tarcov and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker, staff in the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Sentence fragments that might not be appropriate in academic prose have been kept; some long and rambling sentences have been divided; some repeated clauses or words have been deleted. A clause that breaks the syntax or train of thought may have been moved elsewhere in the sentence or paragraph. In rare cases sentences within a paragraph may have been reordered. Where no audiofiles survived, attempts have been made to correct likely mistranscriptions. Brackets within the text record insertions. Ellipses in transcripts without audiofiles have been preserved. Whether they indicate deletion of something Strauss said or the trailing off of his voice or serve as a dash cannot be determined. Ellipses that have been added to transcripts with audiofiles indicate that the words are inaudible. Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted without being noted, but reading assignments have been retained. Citations are provided to all passages so readers can read the transcripts with the texts in hand, and footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov
Editor-in-Chief

Gayle McKeen
Managing Editor

August 2014

Editorial Headnote

This transcript is based upon existing audio files of the course. The course had 17 sessions, out of which two sessions, sessions 8 and 16, were not recorded. The quality of the audio files for this course is particularly poor. The recording set up was often incorrect, so that the taping proceeded but fed back on itself. Our expert audio technician, Craig Harding of September Audio, made the very best of a particularly challenging set of tape recordings, as did our editor, Wayne Ambler, with a particularly challenging transcript.

When texts were read aloud in class, the reader usually omits bracketed material inserted into the text by the editors, Bergin and Fisch. Only such cases of omission as are important for the class discussion are noted in footnotes. Citations are included for all passages.

The texts assigned for the course were *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Frisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1944), and *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Frisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1948).

This transcript was edited by Wayne Ambler, with assistance from Sarah Johnson and Stephanie Ahrens.

For general information about the history of the transcription project and editing guidelines, see the general headnote to the transcripts above.

Session 1: September 30, 1963

Leo Strauss: [1]Now let us then start. This is the first time I give a seminar on Vico. I planned to give one some years ago, but I couldn't; at[2] [that] time there was no copy available.[i] The reason why I never gave a course on Vico is very simple: I never studied Vico. And this has not only [a] private reason, therefore I would like to then explain this. Well, a man cannot study everything;[3] even if one is a teacher of political philosophy one cannot study all worthwhile thinkers in the proper manner. The reason was this: when I began to study, I was as it were guided[4] from one [thinker] to another. I was, for example, interested in Hobbes, and Hobbes showed me the way to Plato, to Aristotle, to Machiavelli; and then Hobbes somehow leads you to Locke and so on. And I studied them, all of the people; Montesquieu and Rousseau, two men who come in a way closest to Vico, but since they never refer to Vico, I did not see any reason why I must study Vico. Of course I had read about Vico in the literature, but what I read there was not sufficiently attractive to me to devote serious study to it. In a word,[5] what became very clear was that Vico had very much to do with the emergence of modern historical criticism. I will speak of that later—well, two famous events in [the] historical criticism of modern times: the criticism of Homer[6] by the German philologist, Friedrich August Wolf[ii], and the criticism of early Roman history by [Barthold Georg] Niebuhr,[iii7] early nineteenth century. This had been anticipated by Vico a hundred years before. It's quite an achievement, but the fundamental point regarding historical criticism, the very principle of it, had been stated much earlier in the seventeenth century by Spinoza in regard to the Old Testament. That was a much graver issue than Homer and early Roman history. Therefore, however important Vico may be in this respect, he doesn't have the same fundamental importance as Spinoza's achievement. It was one reason why I did not turn to Vico.

But I think the time has now come for me to study Vico. Now where does he come in on the basis of what I, for instance, happen to know? And I think one can give a very simple answer: The problem of history. Now let me try to state that problem. Since there are quite a few among you whom I do not know, I will have to say things which others among you have heard. But I will state the things as simply as I can, with a request either to interrupt me or to start a discussion when I have reached some point of rest.

Now let me state the problem of history as it is known today and as it affects us today, without any regard to Vico, first. Now political philosophy can be defined as the quest for the good society or the just society. Now this question has been raised since the very beginning, in Greece, and the result was that we have *n* answers to this question. *N* can be two digits, three digits, whatever you like. And this phenomenon can be called the anarchy within political philosophy: no genuine progress as we have it in physics or the other natural sciences, but an anarchy of the

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[i] The paperback edition of the Bergin and Fisch translation became available only in 1961.

[ii] Friedrich August Wolf*, Prolegomena to Homer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Originally published as *Prolegomena ad Homerum sive De operum Homericorum prisca et genuina formal variisque mutationibus et probabili ratione emandandi* (Halis Saxonum: Libraria Orphanatrophei, 1795).

[iii] A Danish-German scholar and diplomat who wrote a three-volume history of Rome. Barthold Georg Niebuhr, *The History of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1828).

answers given by a variety of thinkers. This observation, which everyone can easily make, leads to skepticism. Is political philosophy possible at all? Because there is no genuine progress and clear observable progress in the way we have it in the exact sciences, especially. Then some man, whose name I will divulge very soon, made this simple observation: If we look at these doctrines [LS writes on the blackboard], we'll call them A, B, C, D, E, and F,[8] which are chaotic, in a way—if we take a somewhat broader view and extend our view beyond the doctrines themselves, then this chaos becomes order because we see then a one-to-one coordination of doctrines to times, to historical situations. A very simple case: Aristotle has a doctrine of property, which contradicts very much Locke's doctrine of property. But if you consider for one moment that Aristotle wrote in the fourth century B.C. and Locke wrote in the seventeenth century in England, then it makes sense: Aristotle as it were is an exponent of Greek society, of a certain part of Greek society, and Locke is an exponent of a certain part of English society in the seventeenth century.

One can say this was Hegel's point, although it is a very crude statement of Hegel's point of view. Doctrines are functions of times. So we have then replaced chaos by order, but naturally at a very heavy price because if this is taken as I have stated it, it means there cannot be *the* true political philosophy, true for all times, since every doctrine will be relative to its time. Every thinker is, in the words of Hegel, the son of his time, and not only in the way in which he shaves or does not shave, or wears ties or shoes, but in his highest and most pure thoughts he is a son of his time. One can modify that, as another German thinker[iv] did, and say [he is] not the son of his time but the stepson of his time because he is not quite at home in his time—but of course the stepson of *his* time and not the stepson of any other time. So this only preserves, this correction only preserves Hegel's thesis. It means, in other words, that all systems (if we may speak of systems) are equal in the decisive respect. They are all at best an adequate expression of their time. They are not simply true.

We may go a step beyond that and speak of the equality of all epochs. All epochs are equal, only they are different among each other. For example, all epochs are equal, as one famous historian[v] put it; all equal: all epochs are equal in the sight of God. They are equal. For example, when Haywood[vi] spoke of the decay of Rome—the Roman Empire, the tyranny of the emperors—he would say[9] that is one thing, and the other is the emergence of Christianity. So you have decay; you have also something new. Fundamentally that is true of every time, and therefore one[10] must[11] speak of the equality of all epochs.

An enlargement of this view, or rather an indication, is the equality of all cultures. The equality of all cultures. This [12]became popularized at a later point by Spengler,[vii] but it was then taken over by American anthropology especially, and there it was accepted with this modification. Spengler spoke, one can say, of the equality of all *high* cultures,[13] whereas anthropology teaches

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[iv] Strauss appears to refer to Nietzsche. See "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," in Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 187.

[v] Strauss refers to Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886).

[vi] Richard Mansfield Haywood, *The Myth of Rome's Fall* (New York: Crowell, 1958).

[vii] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932).

the equality of *all* cultures: high and low are not scientifically useful distinctions. I suppose[14] this fact [is familiar to all of you], that this is a now prevailing way of looking at things[15]. I have to mention it because the thing which escapes us most is the air which we breathe—which is, as you know, invisible and therefore we can easily miss it. We look through it, as it were, to the door and other things, but we do not observe the air. But this air through which we see is in a way more important than anything which we see through it because it determines our way of seeing things.

Now this is one point: the equality of all epochs, of all cultures. And then we have something else in the same world, and I believe what I am speaking about is not any recondite scholarship (although it is grounded on recondite scholarship), but things which you find every day in the newspaper. The other thing: underdeveloped nations. What does it mean? It clearly means inequality: some are developed, others are underdeveloped. What is implied in this notion of underdeveloped is progress, not equality of all ages and of all cultures. Our ordinary thinking, our ordinary unreflective thinking, I believe, is characterized by the coexistence (another fashionable word)—by the coexistence of this kind of egalitarianism and of this other kind of inegalitarianism. I trust that the two expressions are by now clear. Now if we look at the relation of those two concepts—progress on the one hand, equality of cultures and ages on the other—we see that the egalitarian notion of history was preceded by the progressivist notion. Everyone knows that[16] the eighteenth century [was] the famous age of progress, and this egalitarian notion emerged only in the course of the nineteenth century.

Now what is the stronghold of the concept of progress today? I'm not speaking now of any political trend because everyone would of course say communism is that. But I am speaking of something which is very powerful in the Western world. Now that stronghold is of course science, the thing which we can—we must speak of progress. Now science in fact causes the greatest difficulty for historicism. Let us define provisionally historicism's view, that all cultures and all epochs are equal—which is a very superficial definition but which is sufficient for our present purpose because science seems to transcend all cultures. There is no Chinese physics in contradistinction to Venezuelan physics, and so on.[17] So science is the great stronghold of a thought which denies the finality of our historical limitations. But this is not quite so simple. Spengler, who did more than any other individual, I believe, in popularizing the historicist view, denied this very notion of science. He said what we call science is modern Western science belonging to this particular culture, which he called for certain reasons the *faustisch* culture—it doesn't make any difference. The modern Western culture; it belongs to it. And that this science proved to be communicable all over the globe does not contradict its fundamentally Western character; it simply means that Western man by his science succeeds in westernizing the whole globe, that's all. It does not become universal on this score. But more precisely, when one analyzes science in the way in which the students of science try to analyze it, they arrive at certain fundamental premises of science. These fundamental premises are to be defined more precisely as fundamental hypotheses: hypotheses which can never become facts, proven, but which remain hypotheses throughout.[18] These hypotheses prove to be, as people say, logically arbitrary. It would have been as feasible to adopt other fundamental hypotheses[19] [than] those which were in fact adopted when modern science came into being in the seventeenth century.

So what is at the bottom of our science? Is there not any logical or other necessity but a historically contingent decision?[20] We cannot now jump out of that train because we are in it; we cannot jump out of it because we would be killed immediately. But that doesn't do away with the fact that the fundamental premises have this historically contingent character. So in other words, an analysis of science might very well lead to a confirmation of the view that all thought is fundamentally historical. This is of course not to deny that at least on the surface natural science keeps alive the old notion that genuine knowledge essentially transcends the variety of cultures, or history. And this is indicated in the following very simple way. We understand by science, especially in the English language, natural science. It is the science of nature. Now when this notion of nature emerged and was developed by the Greeks, nature was understood above all in contradistinction to what the Greeks called *nomos*, which we may translate by such terms like law, convention, custom. What now is called a culture or a civilization was called by the Greeks a *nomos*, in contradistinction to nature. We can therefore say (and that is somewhat better than what I said before) that historicism, this power which is so powerful today, consists in the interpretation of *nomos* or the *sequence* of such *nomoi* (*nomoi* being the plural of *nomos*)[21] as history. There is no notion of history in earlier thought, as I will explain later.

Now, that such a substitution has taken place is indicated by the following fact. With the emergence of this historical approach, institutions of all kinds, which were formally understood to have been manmade—not necessarily by an individual; it could be done by a sequence of generations—were now understood to have grown: not made, but to have grown. That was the key distinction. But growth is the original meaning of nature. Things which were originally regarded as radically non-natural were—became now regarded as natural in a higher power. There is one point which of importance which I will explain later.

Now let us first reconsider this fact from which we start today as obvious and undeniable. The variety of cultures—yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Before you advance, may I ask one question?

LS: Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: I didn't understand what your argument was to say that we could show that science might be a product of its own historical time. What would be—

LS: If we show, for example, that modern science rests on certain fundamental[22] hypotheses which are, as people say, logically arbitrary—meaning one could as well have chosen different hypotheses; all right, one could say: Well, if we had chosen those hypotheses we would never have this wonderful modern technological achievement. And then the question of course arises: Are these achievements so wonderful in every respect? Think of the nuclear development.

Mr. Butterworth: But even if they're arbitrarily chosen, does this mean that they're therefore determined by historical context?

LS: [23]Determined does not necessarily mean—I mean, did I use the term determined?

Mr. Butterworth: Well, I may have misunderstood you.

LS: No, but it could very well be an[24] [inexplicable] and irreducible choice.[25] Well, perhaps I will explain this briefly.[26] The most common form of historicism of course is this: to say that as Marxists . . . . All these thoughts[27] belong to the superstructure—say, Aristotle's *Politics*, Locke's *Civil Government*—it belongs to the superstructure. And if you want to understand Aristotle or Locke, you have to go back to the infrastructure: to the modes of production in Greece on the one hand, and in seventeenth century England on the other.[28] None of these doctrines is true;[29] they are expressions of a certain situation and fulfill a certain function, social function. They are not true. The truth is the economic basis, or rather the productive basis. You know that.[30] One thing here is implied: The Marxists, or certain equivalents of Marxism among Marxists; they claim[31] they know *the* truth, the transhistorical truth about history: namely, that the modes of production are *the* basic thing, whereas strict historicism says that this is itself a historically conditioned way of looking at things.[32] The Marxist in a way claims to be outside of the historical process—in a way—whereas the strict historicists say no one can be outside of the process.[33] Marxism itself is one historically conditioned theory which has a certain function, obviously; I mean, it achieved quite a bit but it is not true. Now Mr. Miller, you want to say something?

Mr. Miller: Yes, I wanted to ask . . . the relativists who say—

LS: Relativists is still vaguer than historicists.

Mr. Miller: Yes, but I wanted to use something vaguer. I don't know what, really, by what name I should designate it. Maybe by positivists—

LS: No, the positivists—

Mr. Miller: No, I would say that the choice of positivists is arbitrary. Were we ever really given solid examples of this—

LS: Yes, well that is a complicated—you see I have here to rely very much on other people, but I can only say that one of the profoundest students of this problem, who had nothing whatever to do with positivism, saw through the distinctions. Husserl arrived at the same conclusion. So there may be something to that.

Mr. Miller: That may very well be; it's often said. But I really never know what meaning to attach to it. I think of Hume after our discussion tonight—

LS: Yes, but in Hume the problem could not possibly exist because for Hume this so-called problem of history did not exist—

Mr. Miller: No, I understand that—

LS: For example, when Hume speaks of causality, he means of course [that] all men at all times understand by cause the same thing.

Mr. Miller: Yes, but what I was going to say is that Hume, in one of the *Dialogues on Natural Religion* . . . say that after our discussion tonight . . . .[34] Though we have shown the law of cause and effect means nothing, still nobody is going to leave by the window; everybody will walk out the door.

LS: Sure,[35] but there is no question of historicity; here the question would be this: causality means very different things in different cultures. This meaning which it has in modern science is a specific interpretation of causality. Without this specific interpretation of causality you cannot be a scientist in the modern sense. Aristotle also speaks of causality; everyone speaks of it. Every human being who has ever asked the question Why? on any occasion has spoken in causal terms. But this is more specific. Now perhaps it will become clearer from what I'm going to say.

Now the variety of cultures is of course undeniable. But this also, one can say, was always known, *always* known. When Odysseus made his travels he saw the variety of cities and tribes (to say nothing of Plato), but it was not known as the variety of *cultures*. This is of course not merely a verbal point. Let me try to make this clear. There are the various tribes or nations. They have different institutions and give different accounts of their institutions and of the world as a whole. But one thing is here understood, for when Odysseus traveled around, or any other traveler—Marco Polo, or whoever you take—all these various tribes lived within a whole common to *all* tribes, to all men. They all live on the earth and beneath the arc of heaven, and that's elementary. When these older travelers looked at the variety of men, then they found or tended to find the characteristic of each in what the individual tribe looked up to, what they regarded as the highest—say, their gods or their worship of the gods, and this kind of thing. In other words, this is, we can say, the ceiling for every human community: that to which it looks up, whatever that may be. But regarding the ceiling that is shown by traveling, there is profound disagreement among the various branches of the human race.

Now let us look at the flooring. [36]The flooring has this characteristic: that they all agree regarding it. That heaven is there above; earth below; that men are not horses; that men, women, and children are different kinds of men, and so on. These things we can call the flooring. You can reach immediately an agreement between human beings regarding these matters. The disagreement is regarding the heights. The agreement is regarding the—we can say, the lowest. Regarding these elementary things there is knowledge: all men know that. Regarding the highest there is only opinion. Hence this is the first step of philosophy: since there is opinion we must try to replace opinion by knowledge. We must try to reach knowledge of the highest by starting from that primary knowledge which we have regarding the flooring . . . regarding which there is universal agreement.

Now let us call these things from which we start—heaven, earth, men, women, children—absolute facts, facts which are not relative to any particular tribe. Then it means we ascend from these absolute facts to the highest, to the first things, to unchangeable absolute facts, which underlie and make possible all change.

Now this view came to be questioned in modern times. We have no knowledge whatever of absolute facts of any kind. The man who said this most emphatically said: "We have no

knowledge of things in themselves. We have knowledge only of phenomena." Our knowledge consists of two ingredients: sense data and the forms by which these sense data are organized, perceived, interpreted. Surely there cannot be any knowledge of the highest things. The "highest"—in quotation marks—at which we arrive when we analyze our knowledge are the *forms* of perceiving, the forms of perceiving or interpreting. And that (I'm speaking of Kant) Kant calls the categories. Now this step was decisive.[37] When we speak today—I mean [38]the most unsophisticated anthropologist, he thinks in these Kantian terms; whether he knows it or not is unimportant.[39] So let me come back to the key point. [In] the older way of 1ooking, you understand a tribe in terms of what it looks up to; and [in] the present age you understand a tribe in terms of the categories by which it perceives and thinks things.[40] When a man becomes confronted for the first time by this spectacle of the variety of opinions of various tribes regarding the highest things, then he can, at least provisionally, suspend judgment and say: I don't know. Maybe these Spartans are right, or these Persians, and we are Romans. [However,] regarding the categories you cannot suspend judgment because [41]any thought, however skeptical, presupposes the use, the exercise of these categories. Every thought, including the most radical skepticism, presupposes the functioning of the categories. The ultimate consequence is this: there are strictly speaking no facts. What we call facts—this door—is already the product of an interpretation of certain sense data *as* a door. Now Kant still took it for granted that this interpretation, if it is correct, will always take the same form among all men. But after Kant a great change occurred in the following manner: namely, it was asserted that men's perceiving or interpreting changes;[42] the points of view from which different ages or different cultures look at things are radically different. All thought, *all* thought, is from such a specific point of view, historical.

But what becomes of our simple scene when we see two people of very different tribes, different languages, barter a horse for two cows or whatever it may be and they both know what a horse and a cow is? Are there not such facts which are independent of historical variety? Answer: no. No fact, however trivial, goes unchanged from one culture to another. What various people look up to as the highest, this is in itself already a consequence of their point of view, of their horizon, of their categories. And that horizon gives its specific character to everything which appears within the horizon, be it as trivial as a puppy. What goes unchanged from one horizon to another is only something unsayable, because if they say dog, or *kyon*, or *kelev* (or whatever the different words in the different languages are), they mean something different, because you only have to look at the various metaphoric uses of these terms in the different languages to see that one and the same term has a different aura and therefore a different meaning in every particular language. We never reach the absolute facts. Everything said by any man at any time is already specific, belonging to a specific culture.

Now while[43] Kant's epoch-making work is a condition of this historical approach, it is not the sufficient condition because of the absence from Kant of this so-called historical consciousness. But if we limit ourselves for one moment to Kant: What is the key assertion of Kant in his own words? Answer: understanding is not in any way perception, as it was according to the older view. Understanding means putting a form on matter, forming something. Or to give the most famous formula: the understanding prescribes nature its laws. The fundamental laws of nature are not discovered by men but they are imposed by the human understanding on nature.

Now Vico, to bring him in for the first time, prepared that. Vico said we understand only what we make. And Kant said, in effect, we understand only nature because[44] the human understanding prescribes nature its laws. But Vico, who was two generations prior to Kant, seems to have gone much beyond Kant in preparing historicism. Now we plan to study Vico in order to reach a somewhat better understanding of the problem of history. We must make clear to ourselves that this problem of history, as I tried to sketch it, did not exist for earlier ages. It emerged only about 150 years ago, but acquired its full sharpness only in our own age. This profound change must not be obscured as it is almost always in present-day discussion. For example, people today find philosophy of history in all times and ages. (I am vexed because I do not know. That there are people who have written about the philosophy of history of Confucius, of Saint Avesta[viii] and so on, because I know parallel things.) Now some doubt has arisen in certain cases, and therefore people speak in the case of Augustine, for example, and say it is not a philosophy of history but a theology of history. But even that is a question of an expression.

Let us look for one moment at the term history. That is a Greek word, *historia*, which means inquiry. And it is still known in this way: for example, at least when I went to school we had a branch of study called natural history—description of possums and tigers, you know? Descriptive zoology and botany were called natural history. I don't know whether it's still true today; it could be called biology. History means inquiry and therefore also recording the results of the inquiry. But it came soon to mean also, especially, such inquiry as calls for inquiry with human beings. For example, in order to find out about rats it is not essentially necessary to ask other human beings about them. You can look at them yourself. But there are things which you can know only by asking other human beings: for example, about what happened prior to your birth. Then you ask the older people and see what happened two generations before; because whether you ask them when they are still alive—your grandparents or great-grandparents or beyond—or you find documents which they left behind, doesn't make any essential difference. So therefore history took on the meaning of inquiry about such things as can be known only by human records. Let us say the past, the human past. History then means inquiry about the past, or about what happened around you—of course, what human beings do and the record of this. It never meant, it *never* meant, the object of this kind of inquiry. Today it means also, and above all, the object of this. When a man speaks of the historical process, he doesn't mean the process which historians record. He may also mean that, but it's not the primary meaning. When people speak today of nature and history, nature is one *field*, one region, and history is another *field*, another region. This notion is very recent.

Even the very term history, the very word history, whatever it might mean, is by no means something which must be taken for granted. How often have I read that the great importance of the Old Testament is the discovery of history? Yes, one simple question: What is the Hebrew term for history? *Historia*, i.e. the Greek or Latin word for history, [was] adopted very late. What one could say in the Old Testament is the word *dibh're hayyamim*, which means chronicles or annals, or *toledot*, which means generations. The latter word is very interesting because it was used for some . . . as the generations of men (some chapters begin this way, and then they tell you the story of these generations). But this word generation was used earlier as a translation for the Greek word of nature, because generation is of course a natural process. So this great root of

[viii] Or, perhaps "Santa Vesta," but—as often—the audiofile is not clear.

western thought, the Old Testament, does not know of history in any strict sense. Where does it emerge?

I'll make a very big jump. In the early nineteenth century, for the first time we find a school which calls itself the historical school. There have been all kinds of schools since the time of the Greeks; there never was a historical school. This was something new: the first historical school that ever was. [45]This historical school was a school of students of law, of folklore, and so on and so on. It was not strictly speaking a philosophic school, although there were some philosophers in the background. But as such it was decidedly not a philosophic school. Let us consider this historical school for one moment. As you would find in every textbook, and that is quite correct, the historical school was a conservative school. Incidentally, the most famous English representative of it is Henry Sumner Maine,[ix] who wrote in the sixties of the last century and who has a very nice book on ancient law. But this has now become absolutely a part of the routine and we forget the . . . problems.[46] The historical school had a political function. It emerged in reaction to the French Revolution, to the fabrication of constitutions and legal codes. And the historical school asserted: No fabrication. Fabrication is bad or impossible. The only thing is growth, slow growth. The historical school inherited—was in a way an heir to the most famous critic of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke. And it is very interesting to see that Edmund Burke did not speak of history.

But what Burke has to say about history is old traditional stuff and is of no interest here. Burke's term was prescription. Now prescription is a term of Roman law and from Roman private law. Prescription is that procedure by which you establish your property rights if contested. As far as we know, it was never used in public law as public law. The embarrassment is very interesting: Burke had to take a term of Roman private law in order to fulfill a need which later on was fulfilled apparently so simply by the word history. Because history filled that lacuna which Burke tried to fill with the term prescription. Incidentally, I think one of the most urgent studies regarding Burke would really be a study of the term prescription as used by him—he does not use it as often as one would think—and go back into pre-history. I mean, I am not aware of its use by any earlier political writer as distinguished from lawyers, private lawyer[s]. This would be worth studying.

Now, prescription: that was the entire revolutionary principle. It was called politically, a generation after him, legitimacy. The Holy Alliance—legitimacy. That's . . . . But the theoreticians of the Holy Alliance, at least in Germany, were the historical school, one must not forget that. So in other words, this historical school and its understanding of history implied the opposition between historical and revolutionary. What is revolution, from this point of view? Answer: the direct appeal from positive law to natural law. The French Revolution, Robespierre, or whoever else you take: here the law applies. It is a positive law that doesn't have any intrinsic validity, and surely not if it contradicts natural law. The appeal from the positive law to natural was the principle of the French Revolution. And the historical school tried to make this impossible for the future.

One can therefore say the historical consciousness, i.e. the awareness of history, took the place of natural law. Now this is a very long process going throughout the nineteenth century, and it was

[ix] Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1861).

perhaps fulfilled only at the end of the nineteenth century. But still, in principle, it was there from the beginning. There is an essay by Troeltsch, a German historian [LS writes on the blackboard], on this subject, on the substitution of historical consciousness for natural law, translated by Ernest Barker in his translation of Gierke[x]. I don't remember now if that was a two volume work.

Mr. Reinken: It is available in paperback: Otto von Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*, the two volumes found in one. Troeltsch is pages 201 to 22. [Laughter]

LS: It would be of some use to read it. I mean although this is by no means sufficient, but this point Troeltsch makes very clear: that what happened in the nineteenth century, at least in Germany, but then through Germany indirectly the whole Western world, was the substitution of the so-called historical consciousness, awareness of history, for natural law.

Now this is however one great indication that one cannot understand this notion of history except in the light of the concept of natural law. If history is successor to natural law—I mean history now as a concept: "History" with a capital H and in quotes—if "History" is the successor to natural law, then one cannot understand this concept of "History" except in the light of natural law. Now in order to do that one cannot leave it at the French Revolution and its passionate and violent break with the past, the appeal from positive law to natural law, and the reaction to it: never must there be made any such appeal from the positive law to a higher law. That's a simple reaction to it. And that means the best thing would of course simply be to say there is no natural law; then you cannot appeal to it. This took some time . . . . But one formula which is very well known: Not rights of man, that's natural; rights of Englishmen, historical. You know these things. Good.

In order to understand this, one cannot look at the situation as it appeared around 1800. One must go much further back. Within natural law itself an important change had taken place in the seventeenth century, of which we will have to speak quite a bit in this seminar. I mention here only one point. The natural law doctrine as developed especially by Thomas Aquinas implied of course that natural law must be sufficiently promulgated in order to be a law. If there is a law, intrinsically a law, prescribing men what to do and what to forbear, and this law is not known to men, it cannot be a law. Now Thomas Aquinas guaranteed this sufficient promulgation by his concept of *synderesis*, which we can loosely translate by [the word] conscience. In other words, the natural law is sufficiently promulgated in the human conscience; and of course also the biblical account of the origin of man. You will see in a minute why this is crucial. But then people began to question the biblical account of the origin of man. This of course doesn't begin with Darwin, as some people believe. No creation, no conscience strictly speaking. Now if no creation, then no perfect beginnings, because that is a key implication of the biblical account. The beginnings are low, which now has become really trivial since the days of Darwin.[47]

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[x] Ernst Troeltsch, "The Ideas of Natural Law and Humanity," in Otto Friedrich von Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society, 1500–1800*, trans. Ernest Barker (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). See also Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 1-2.

The man who started from these low beginnings with greater success than anyone else was Hobbes. [48]Hobbes, however, came into very great difficulties. Hobbes said men lived originally like beasts in the forest, isolated, in a terrible situation: a war of everybody against everybody. The only way to get out of it is to unite, and they cannot unite except by contract, social contract. How can these savages, living in isolation and therefore having not even language of any kind, how can they possibly think so far ahead that the establishment of government would solve their problem and therefore conclude the social contract? Could men in the Hobbean state of nature have developed reason so that they can conclude a contract? A very good question. Hence the natural law is not sufficiently promulgated at the beginning, but only at the very advanced stage of the long experiences, long developments. Now this is already indicated by Locke, but much more clearly by Rousseau in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, the so-called *Second Discourse*, which according to Rousseau himself is a *history* of man. In order to lay a new basis for natural law as he understood it, Rousseau was compelled to write a history of man. The history shows the insufficient promulgation of natural law and therewith, of course, that the natural law is not universally valid: How can it be valid for men who cannot possibly understand it?

Now this point, the insufficient promulgation of the law of nature, is obviously a key point in Vico. And Vico preceded Locke.[xi] I'm regardless puzzled that I think there is no real evidence that Rousseau was influenced by Vico. These things came somehow; they were, in a way, in the air. But surely the situation is very different in Vico than it is in Rousseau. And the simple proof of this is: in Rousseau's thought it begins with this history of man which is a kind of alleged refutation of traditional natural law, to repeat, because traditional natural law is based on the premise that natural law is sufficiently promulgated to man as man. And after having refuted that, Rousseau sets out to develop his own doctrine and this may be said to culminate in his book called *Of the Social Contract*. In Vico there is no parallel to a book called *The Social Contract*; so Vico did something very different from Rousseau although they have something in common. Of course we must also not forget that Vico claims to be a Catholic, and he probably was a pious Catholic, whereas Rousseau claims to be a Protestant but in a very loose sense of the word, as I think one can safely say. So Vico and Rousseau have this point in common. I mean I mention this point for one reason: because Rousseau I know somewhat, and therefore I find my way there more easily than in Vico. Forgive me for this egocentricity.

[change of tape]

I said, in a way, this whole thing started with Hobbes: low beginnings, beast-like beginnings. This in itself is of course not a notion which Hobbes was the first to hold; that goes back to classical antiquity, and there is especially one book which is as it were the classic presentation of this view, and that is Lucretius, the Roman Epicurean [LS writes on blackboard], who wrote a poem, *On the Nature of Things*, which was used and known by both Vico and Rousseau. [49]Now Vico in his *Autobiography* will mention[50] the fact that Epicurus and Lucretius played a great role in Naples in his youth and there was quite a movement . . . . Now it would not do any harm to any of you if you would read in Lucretius in the fifth Book from verse 95 to the end of Book 5. This is just to have a notion of this anti-Aristotelian, and surely also anti-biblical, understanding of the origins of man. Now there is another[51] [point] where we can understand Vico's general

[xi] Locke: 1632-1704. Vico: 1668-1744.

intention without, as it were, having read him. Rousseau, in the *Second Discourse*, develops the history of man. Man originally was savage, irrational, pre-rational, slowly becoming rational, i.e., slowly becoming able to grasp the right of reason, the natural law. Once he has truly come to understand it in its true foundation, i.e.[52] with Rousseau, then and only then can man develop *the* rational order of society, the order according to natural law, which Rousseau does in the *Social Contract*.

Now, all right. Rousseau knows what the right order of society is; he publishes his book in 1762. But to *know* what the right order of society is not the same as to establish it. How could it be established? Well, it's—I mean, not anything sophisticated, it's very simple: people will read it, will read the *Social Contract*, and some may be influential men. Some may become influential men because there may be a revolution, and some provincial lawyer in the Picardy, like Robespierre, who has absolutely nothing to say now and is a struggling young lawyer, will be able to do something about it. So in other words, the teaching will be communicated. But not only Robespierre and such people will read it—other people too. There will be an enlightening propaganda by the book. And if we state it in the simplest form: the kingdom of darkness, where only wrong views of the right order of society prevail, will be replaced [53]through enlightenment, by the kingdom of light. This was a notion which also Hobbes had: by enlightenment from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. This means, however, that the transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light is in itself a strictly rational process; just as people learn geometry by studying Euclid, they learn alike in politics by studying Hobbes, or Rousseau, or whoever it may be. This is in this sense a rational and not a natural process. But [54]underlying Hobbes' very doctrine of natural law there was the notion that reason is[55] rather powerless. Passion is much more powerful than reason; passion, let us say sentiment, rather than reason. Will then[56] reason [be] sufficient for bringing about the transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light? Must we not understand this process leading from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light as a natural process, as a process not brought about by demonstrative speeches, and perhaps not by speeches at all? This is also an element of what we call . . . . This—the development from the beast-like human beings to now, the eighteenth century in southern Italy, is not an irrational process, properly.[xii] Secondly—and here's another point we have to consider, of which we find enough traces in Rousseau, too: Is the kingdom of light, your modern rational society based on modern political philosophy, is this simply superior to the so-called kingdom of darkness? Did the kingdom of darkness, in English, the Middle Ages, not have some virtues which have been lost by the transition? On the very external and popular level in the late eighteenth century, the admiration for gothic things—architecture and so on—is a sign of this common value before the French Revolution. And this I believe is, as far as I can see,[57] also a point which is effective in Vico.

These were the points I wanted to make now. Now[58] we still have some time.[59] I would like to see whether I succeeded in making clear what I understand by the problem of history, so that we have some common basis. The further procedure will be this: we will have two meetings, the

[xii] As often, the recording it not entirely clear. Strauss may have said, "is not a rational process properly."

next meeting, devoted to the *Autobiography*,[60] and then we will go to the main work of Vico, the *New Science*, in the way[61] which I indicated. Now let's have some exchange—[62] Mr. . . . ?[xiii] Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: The first two meetings will be on the *Autobiography*.

LS: Yes. I do not know whether it was a sound suggestion, but now the arrangements are made and we have to follow them up. Mr. . . . ?

Student: In describing Vico in relation to Kant you suggested [that] Vico said that we understand only what we make, and Kant that human understanding describes[xiv] nature's laws.

LS: Yes.

Student: Are you suggesting that Vico had a powerful influence on later thought by being the first to say we understand what we make?

LS: No. In the first place he was not the first to say that. No, no—I mean, that is very strange and that you see from the lecture on Vico: Vico's influence, especially outside of southern Italy, or Italy in general, was very slight and he became influential outside of Italy only in the early nineteenth century, that is to say about sixty years after his death. And he also did not take any . . . outside of Italy. But by that time European thought had as it were . . . had caught up with it.[63] But not in important details. In these important ways, like the criticism of Roman history, and of Homer, he was still somewhat in advance, so that the key men in this respect still learned from Vico. That is the reason why I never studied Vico—because, you know, the broad development takes place independently[64]. He played a great role in Italy, but especially in the nineteenth century he was an outsider, a somewhat baroque man as a writer, as we will see.

Student: Could you summarize for us the most powerful reason for studying Vico in the light of the modern development of historicism?

LS: [65]I would say the most obvious reason . . . because in political philosophy strictly understood he is of no great importance . . . which developed since the seventeenth century, where Vico doesn't play any role.[66] He stated an earlier form of the problem of history more powerfully than any men before, say, any philosopher before 1800. That seems to be a fact. Now Croce,[xv] an

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[xiii] At this point there is an exchange between Strauss and some of the students about the text: the *New Science* is not in the bookstore, and someone is charged with taking responsibility for securing copies for the students who are taking the course for credit. This exchange, which is only partially audible, has been deleted from the transcript.

[xiv] Perhaps the student said, or meant to say, that understanding *prescribes* nature's laws.

[xv] Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. R. G. Collingwood (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913).

Italian philosopher of this century, who wrote a book on Vico which is truly worth reading—he is a great admirer of Vico, and he says Vico anticipated the whole[67] [nineteenth] century with this formula. In a way that's true from the facts which he adduces, but it means of course also that for those who know the nineteenth century have it in themselves, they cannot learn that much from Vico.[68] What Croce does all the time is to show that what distinguishes Vico, say, from the sophisticated historians of around 1910, are only excerpts stemming from the bad old times; and that is of course an additional reason for not reading Vico. I think we should not do this and see whether these . . . are not perhaps more valuable than the nineteenth century . . . we can decide . . . without even looking. Yes?

Student: . . . the problem of history you referred to Kant, and I thought I heard you say something to the effect of, we look at a word for a phenomenon and . . . metaphors for that word, we see that the word is proper only for certain cultural contexts. Did I understand you correctly?

LS: I don't recognize anything I said in what you say. [Laughter]

Different Student: . . . speaking of dog, but what you call "speak of a dog" . . . is also the connotation of what it means to call someone a dog.

LS: So, for example—

First Student: . . . .

LS: In other words—ya, it doesn't have to be pejorative, it may also be positive, but at any rate the aura of words differs from language to language. Yes? And this[69], one can say, is as important as the literal and primary meaning regarding which all men might agree. The dog is a famous barking animal which is healthy when it has a wet nose and other famous characteristics, and . . . . Pardon?

Student: Can you contend that men would disagree from age to age or cultural context to cultural context?

LS: Well, yes, in the case of the dog I think this can be wonderfully shown. Dog worship—I haven't made a close study, but one thing seems to be clear: that dog worship is a very recent phenomenon. If I'm not misinformed, the first dog worshiper was Rousseau. I mean, you know that people used dogs and treated them well; that is an older story. The ultimate . . . but surely we find quite a few Greek specimens. But dog worship, you know, of which you find whenever you see, for example, if you don't know . . . dog worshipper, you see from time to time advertisements of dog food—

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . and which would not have appealed in this way to men of former generations—I mean, that's a long story, this modern thing. So in the case of dogs, I would say it is easy to show.[70] I was not interested now in suggesting any criticism of historicism, only that we understand what it means. It means that there cannot be strictly speaking any human thought, however trivial,

which is not, if it is properly and fully understood, peculiar to the specific culture or the specific age. And this would apply even . . . . Mr. Johnson?

Mr. Johnson: . . . historical consciousness . . . in Rousseau, there is a place for the general will—

LS: Well, in Rousseau the problem is solved in this way: that a long history was needed, and a history of fundamentally . . . character so that men could come to see what the just order of society is. But this is *the* just order of society. And you know there is no change . . . . Now if one tries to develop that theoretically, one arrives at this notion, and this was the older version, the first version of historicism. I spoke of Hegel; now Hegel . . . . doctrine, function of time. Yet Hegel still elaborated a political philosophy proper in his *Philosophy of Right*. Was it then also a function of time, say, of 1821 or whenever he published it? Hegel said: Yes, but this is an absolute time, the *end* of the development. Then of course you know,[71] Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is in this respect meant as final as Locke's C*ivil Government* or Aristotle's *Politics*—the content of it. But the formal difference is this: that there is no such historical perfection[xvi] in the earlier thinkers; there is one in Hegel but the historical reflection is reconciled with the claim to finality by the assertion that this doctrine belongs to the final time, and therefore, there may be—who knows what will happen later—but there cannot be any progress beyond it. There can be decay and whatnot, or expansion, but there cannot be any progress.

Student: Rousseau . . . general will . . . .

LS: Yes, this is part of this point to which I alluded, that this modern natural right doctrine was based on a questioning of reason and therefore . . . . Hobbes had spoken of the public reason, *ratio publica*. Rousseau speaks of the general will. This—surely, that is an important point. But nevertheless Rousseau—his doctrine is meant to be a rationally demonstrated doctrine, and the final doctrine. And this, in the nineteenth century, Hegel was last . . . . For Hegel the historical process—historicity of thought does not lead to what Mr. Miller calls relativism because there is an absolute moment in history. Ordinarily, I mean the post-Hegelian historicism, including of course the contemporary one, denies the possibility of an absolute moment. History is unfinished and unfinishable; there is always an open future, which doesn't mean that human life might not come to an end, but this would be proven from the outside. There is always an open future, and therefore[72] there cannot be a final doctrine. And this has of course [a] very grave consequence; most of our friends do not think about the importance this consequence has, for example, in the first place, for history. Can there be historical objectivity on this basis—which was taken for granted by earlier men. Is not every history written from a point of view? How did Carl Becker say? He had a formula for that: "Every man his own historian"[xvii]—yes, something of this kind. So there cannot be objectivity in any interesting point. This is of course . . . whereas Hegel took it for granted that his judgment about what the Greeks contributed, or what the Persians contributed, are *the* final and objective judgments, period. Yes?

[xvi] Strauss may have said, "historical reflection."

[xvii] Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered at Minneapolis, December 29, 1931. *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 221-36.

Student: You say that the historical school arose to fill a political need of the time. Would you say that Vico has a claim on our attention even though the historical school seems in the main to—or rather it . . . has a claim on our attention because he does not elaborate his thought in response to a political need but rather in solitary—

LS: You can say that, and one can say with this perhaps also what Croce's interpretation means,[73] you know, that Vico is a man of much greater stature because his doctrine doesn't have this narrow—one can say that. But we must see also what Vico's precise views were on political matters. As far as I have seen he takes for granted that, given a certain—the highest level of social development, there will be monarchy, which surely would link him much more with Hobbes, and perhaps Gibbon,[xviii] than with Rousseau. Mr. . . . ?

Student: I had this question earlier, before last week or so, in which the question came up as to whether the statements[74] regarding Vico that are made by those who commented on Vico—such as [that] he contradicts himself, that he writes loosely, and so on—whether you would regard these statements in the same light as you would regard, say, the statements that some of the great political philosophers contradict themselves—people who say Montesquieu contradicted himself. And whether you would analyze these statements, these so-called contradictory statements—that they were not contradictory, therefore considering Vico as a great writer.

LS: No, I would say I don't believe so. I would not be inclined to assume.

Student: You would not be inclined to assume he's a great writer—

LS: In this sense, no. I mean in other words a man of infinite . . . . Vico wrote I believe twelve volumes in the collected work; we will read only one, because the other work is not very important. And we will read *the* final version of what he regarded as his most important thought . . . . But no, there is only one point where it is possible that Vico conceals . . . and that concerns his whole position . . . . Very briefly, what he develops is a doctrine, what he calls "of the natural right of the gentiles" . . . formulation what happened after the Flood[75]. So in other words . . . say what happened from the Flood up to, say, the Roman Empire. This is his concern and it is not applicable to the Bible, according to . . . . Now[76] whether there was a simple side-by-side of his belief in the Bible on the one hand, and this natural right of the gentiles on the other, this is hard to understand. You know, it would surely deprive his work . . . of most of what . . . because it would not be applicable to . . . . In other words it would be merely . . . . This is hardly credible. I learned from Croce that in the nineteenth century Italian liberals, Mazzini and so forth, were sure that these were merely accommodations to the situation in Naples at that time. Croce denies that; but he—I must say he doesn't argue at all; the only argument is that Vico was an honest man and wouldn't do such things. Well, that's an insufficient argument. But[77]that he would use very sophisticated devices—I haven't seen any reason for that. The *Autobiography* is a very strangely written book. You will have to say something about that.

Mr. Reinken: A comment just in support of what you say: the honest Vico is at pains to show himself as an accommodating man before irrational pressures.

[xviii] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Womersley (New York: Penguin, 2000).

LS: Yes, that was my impression also . . . but[78] let us not make a priori judgments. Yes?

Student: . . . I wasn't sure how careful a writer Vico is but on the point of religion, there were two points that made me wonder about his candor. The first is that he says that[79] in order for there to be philosophers there have to be commonwealths, and there can't be commonwealths without religion—

LS: I beg your pardon?

Student: He says in order for there to be philosophers there have to be commonwealths, and in order for there to be commonwealths there has to be religion. And the second thing is that although he disclaims the applicability of his theory to sacred history, in several places in the book he gives[80] a number of grounds . . . and gives biblical examples.

LS: We will have to take that up at some point; there's no use to speculating in general, but we will consider these passages. Now this general thesis—that no philosophy without commonwealths, societies; and no societies without religion—is of course in itself not a striking assertion. The striking assertion is that natural law as traditionally understood is a philosophic teaching, and can therefore not be known except at a very advanced stage[81]. In other words the genesis of societies cannot be understood in terms of natural law because it cannot be known to the—I mentioned the Flood. When one studies Locke's *Civil Government* (I mean not only the *Second Treatise* but also the *First Treatise*, which people ordinarily don't read), one is constantly compelled by the quotations from the Bible to think: Where do you locate the state of nature in biblical terms? It cannot be paradise, that's clear. And I think since Locke takes it for granted that man in the state of nature may eat meat, and the permission to eat meat was given only after the Flood[82], that the locus of Locke's state of nature is after the Flood too, and to that extent a kindred question as you can see from . . . .

One point which we must also not neglect while we go, and we will do this partly on the basis of the *Autobiography*, is: Who were the thinkers, especially from political philosophy whom Vico knew, at least in such a way that he regarded it worth recording what he thought about them? And we will see that all the great names occur, at least in the *New Science*: Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Bayle, occur; of course Montesquieu and Rousseau after. Good, then we will leave it at that and meet again. Wednesday, yes.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "**LS**: Well—yes, Mr. Butterworth? **Mr. Butterworth**: Do you know if . . . papers . . . . . **LS**: Ya, that is a good point. Now will those who take this course for credit raise their right or left hand. [LS counts to 8.] So that's to say—did you raise your hand? **Student**: No. **LS**: That's very good because . . . so six more papers. We have almost sufficieint students. One or two must read two papers, probably one . . . . "
[2] Deleted "this."
[3] Deleted "not even every—."
[4] Deleted "by."
[5] Deleted "it was—."
[6] Deleted "as."

[7] Deleted “or.”
[8] Deleted “and.”
[9] Deleted “there.”
[10] Deleted “can.”
[11] Deleted “say.”
[12] Deleted “was”
[13] Deleted “and—.”
[14] Deleted “these things are very—.”
[15] Moved “is familiar to all of you.”
[16] Deleted “in.”
[17] Deleted “Yes, but even—.”
[18] Deleted “They are—.”
[19] Deleted, “as.”
[20] Deleted “which we cannot.”
[21] Deleted “in the interpretation of *nomos* as a sequence of *nomoi*,”
[22] Deleted “hypotheseses—.”
[23] Deleted “Determined—that is—.”
[24] Deleted “unexplicable.”
[25] Deleted “You see that is—.”
[26] Deleted “There is—.”
[27] Deleted, “as.”
[28] Deleted “Then—this is of course—.”
[29] Deleted “they have certain—.”
[30] Deleted “But this is—.”
[31] Deleted “they have given—.”
[32] Deleted “You cannot—.”
[33] Deleted “There cannot be—.”
[34] Deleted “shown, still—though we have shown that the materiality of the—.”
[35] Deleted “but it is—.”
[36] Deleted “Regarding which”
[37] Deleted “What—From the—.”
[38] Deleted “and”
[39] Deleted “What is—.”
[40] Deleted “is this. Regarding the highest—I mean.”
[41] Deleted “you always”
[42] Deleted “radically.”
[43] Deleted “Kant—.”
[44] Deleted “we.”
[45] Deleted “Now what does this”
[46] Deleted “It was—.”
[47] Deleted “Now this law began”
[48] Deleted “So in other words”
[49] Deleted “and one should”
[50] Deleted “on the pages there, mentions.”
[51] Deleted “question.”
[52] Deleted “with Hobbes, [Strauss corrects himself abruptly:].”
[53] Deleted “by enlightenment”
[54] Deleted “there”
[55] Deleted “not.”
[56] Moved “be.”
[57] Deleted “is.”
[58] Deleted “we don’t have—.”
[59] Deleted “there must—.”
[60] Deleted “and then we will have.”
[61] Deleted “in.”
[62] Deleted administrative details.

[63] Deleted “And therefore—.”
[64] Deleted “and he was then—.”
[65] Deleted “Yes, no, there is only—.”
[66] Deleted “But he—.”
[67] Deleted “eighteenth.”
[68] Deleted “Now when I—.”
[69] Deleted “is.”
[70] Deleted “But the key point regarding—I mean.”
[71] Deleted “then the doctrine—.”
[72] Deleted “there is no—.”
[73] Deleted “that,”
[74] Deleted “the.”
[75] Deleted “after the flood.”
[76] Deleted “whether this was.”
[77] Deleted “this is, I regard as.”
[78] Deleted “we—.”
[79] Deleted “philosophy—.”
[80] Deleted “—he’ll give.”
[81] Deleted “and can therefore—.”
[82] Moved “only.”

Session 2: October 2, 1963

Leo Strauss: Now, what Father Warren said at the end, and[1] what[2] [he] alluded to throughout his paper, is that this *Autobiography* is much earlier than that version of the *New Science* which we are going to read.[i] It is therefore not as authoritative of Vico's own point of view as the *New Science*, that later and final version, which was published immediately after Vico's death, which we will read beginning a week from today.

Now I would like to say two points about the paper. You pointed out very strongly that Vico is a Christian thinker, but you stated also that he is silent on Augustine and Bossuet[ii]—

Student:[iii] Not—almost . . . .

LS: Almost . . . . Why do you mention these two particular men?

Student: Well, I think first of all, the only reason I mentioned Augustine is because he refers explicitly to Augustine in his other work where he considers him to be, as he calls . . . *Augustinus*. And Bossuet, mainly because of[3] what I consider to be in many ways a similar treatment of—

LS: Well, universal history—yes—

Student: Although he was somewhat more transcendent than Vico would be.

LS: Ya, but[4] still, you found there is a minor difficulty because he is so silent about Bossuet and almost silent about Augustine. And when . . . you said: "Although he calls his own work as concerned with civil theology," what does the "although" mean? What do you mean by the "although?"

Student: Oh, I was specifically saying that if you don't grasp the existence of the theological foundations of this . . . we miss an important aspect of what Vico . . . .

LS: I thought you meant something very simple, that the term civil theology is best known from Augustine. Yes, Augustine gives a report about a doctrine of a pagan writer, Varro[iv], a contemporary of Cicero. (Incidentally, could you get for me the Varro edition out from the . . . and since you have it, also Tacitus, the . . . Tacitus, the *Dialogue on the Orators*. Thank you very much. Good. Fine.) You know[5] Varro gives a summary of the doctrine, allegedly of

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[i] Strauss responds to Father Warren's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) was a French bishop and theologian, who wrote a *Discourse on Universal History* that was often viewed as a second edition of St. Augustine's *City of God*.

[iii] Presumably Father Warren.

[iv] Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 B.C.) was a Roman scholar of whose many works few survive. Strauss probably refers to his *On the Latin Language in 25 Books*, of which six books survive.

Stoic origin, according to which there are three theologies: the theology of the philosophers; the theology of the poets; and the theology of the legislators, or civil theology. Now[6] civil theology is in this older doctrine a theology which does not claim to be true but which is necessary for the health of the commonwealth. Now Vico speaks of *civil* theology as that with which he is particularly concerned. You used the term synthesis of Vico. I think that although it is one of the most misused terms that exist, but it is perfectly legitimate to use it in the case of Vico. We will come back to that later.

Now one word in advance about[7] this assertion [that] we understand only what we make. And since we do not make nature, natural things, we cannot strictly speaking understand them. We understand only what we make. Now let us try to understand this provisionally, quite superficially. What is the starting point for this assertion? Because it is in itself a very simple thing, a very obvious thing—not in the way in which Vico would like it, but in the primary meaning. For example, take a dog on the one hand, and a chair on the other. Any carpenter who is not completely inarticulate can give you a perfect account of why he made the chair in this manner: why he used these materials and not those, why he gave it this shape and not that, why he applied this color and not that, and so on. But he knows the chair *perfectly*; there is no mystery whatever in it because he made it with his eyes open. Now in the case of the dog [there is] *infinite* doubt, because he did not make it. So the arts, in other words—this is the starting point of the horizon: the distinction between art, artifacts and nature. Artifacts are perfectly lucid, not for everyone, but for those human beings who made them. Good.

Now the distinction between nature and man is an entirely different distinction from that between nature and artifacts. How do we arrive at the distinction between nature and man? By starting from the distinction between nature and artifacts. Now there was this distinction in no way identical with the distinction between natural things and artifacts, and that is between natural things and human things. Man is of course a natural being, and man is at least as mysterious as a dog. You know? But human things, things made by man (and that does not necessarily mean artifacts proper; it may also mean institutions)—but human things has a rather wide meaning,[8] say, in Xenophon, Plato, [and] in Aristotle, where it means the good things, the just things, the noble things. They are also[9] less mysterious than the natural things in themselves. But human things and man are two very different things. It is a disgraceful thing which I have observed in translations of, for example, Xenophon. When Xenophon speaks of human things they say "human nature." I have observed that in Martin. This is of course a disgraceful misunderstanding. Human nature is infinitely different from the human things, things with which we have to deal, with which we are concerned. It is relatively simple.

Where does the distinction between nature and *man* come from? Now [10]the distinction of which I spoke now, which deals with natural things and human things, was basically Aristotle. And the distinction between the theoretical sciences and the practical sciences is fundamentally the same. Practical sciences deal with the human things. The theoretical sciences deal, let us say, with natures, above all human nature. But where do we find the distinction between nature and man very visibly? I'm not speaking of any recondite . . . . Where do we find the distinction between—where do we find a doctrine of man as . . . . In Aristotle, for example, you can say his psychology, his *De Anima*, gives a doctrine of man; but that is not quite correct because it deals with *all* living beings: souls, and not only the human ones, but also—. But when you look at such

a well-known book as the *Summa Theologica*, it is divided into books according to [the] Christian doctrine of incarnation: there is God, *De Deo*; and then *De homine*, on man. And here I think there is the most simple source for the notion of a doctrine of man and not merely of the human things.

Now this was taken over by Bacon especially, and one can say Vico here simply follows the Christian tradition. But again, following what you said, what Father Warren said, the distinction between nature and man is not identical with the distinction between nature and history, which we are concerned with here today. And in studying Bacon we will understand the transition from nature and man to nature and history better than we do.

It was very sensible of you that you . . . dismissed the question of why we study Vico. Not that it is not an important question, but[11] after we have decided for reasons which are, we hope, good enough to study Vico, we must then simply say: Well, now let us study Vico and forget about our reasons which might possibly lead us to *distort* Vico. Let us look at [how] *he meant* his doctrine.

Now here in the *Autobiography*, which for good or for bad reasons we start with, there is one point which stuck out in my reading and you also saw this quite clearly. The first question of course is[12] [who] are the men from whom he learned, or to use the usual historians' term: the influences. And one man is conspicuous by his absence. You said it in a way, but I wish you had said it more emphatically. From whom did he not learn? Because he believed you can't learn anything from him . . . .

Student: Aristotle.

LS: Aristotle. You can also say Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas is not mentioned at all, but Aristotle is mentioned and he had read him in his youth, but—out. So Aristotle is out. That's the first thing. Now is this—I mean, let us see what this means in 1723 or [17]25 when he wrote that. Since when was Aristotle out? Do we know something about that? Because let us never forget the fact that there is not a single philosopher who had had such long and continuous influence as Aristotle, from his adoption in the thirteenth century on. He lasted[13] [for] centuries; no modern could ever forget he was such a *king* for such a long time. Now when was he dethroned? Mr. Umbanhowar?

Mr. Umbanhowar: It was during the Renaissance, when a number of Greek scholars had to evacuate Constantinople because of the invasion of certain Italian city-states and they went to . . .

LS: Why did they leave Constantinople?

Student: Why? Well, because . . . city state . . . and destroyed it . . . . [Laughter]

LS: Since you refer to such inaccuracies . . . clear: the Turks conquered it in 1453.

Student: So they came to Italy . . . .

LS: Well, all right—but still, this is a kind of a fairy tale. [Laughter]

Mr. Umbanhowar: . . . .

LS: Yes,[14] in this way the West came to know quite a few Greek writers, especially Plato, much better than before; that's quite true. But still, something was brewing anyway and the real explosion took place a little bit later, in the sixteenth century; but still, a very simple thing: Aristotle was still the master of the Schools until the seventeenth century. When Hobbes wrote his *Elements of Law* in 1640, he still said that there is no man who has such a great authority in these parts (meaning England) as Aristotle. 1640. And Hobbes [15]didn't like Aristotle particularly.[16] But when was this—[17]so in the seventeenth century—of course there's Galileo and so forth—but we can give a certain date when this dethroning of Aristotle, this big revolution was now completed. It started in the sixteenth century, but it was completed when?

Student: In 1680, with Newton.

LS: Newton. When Newton was able to give an account of heaven which was much truer and simpler than Aristotle's, this brought it home to the meanest capacity that Aristotle was wrong. . . . Good. So Aristotle is clearly out. Good. Who takes the place of Aristotle in Vico's thought, you know, amongst the philosophers? You mentioned it.

Student: Plato.

LS: Plato. This is again something very typical: Plato taking over. And this has a variety of reasons. One very simple thing is this: the new modern natural science was a mathematical natural science. Plato's natural science also was a mathematical natural science, although a very different one from that of Galileo and Newton. This is[18] [a] very obvious one, and there are other reasons. For example, there is one very simple fact: when Hobbles was still young (and that meant in the case of this man of enormous longevity that he was fifty or younger), he was still an Aristotelian, Aristotle was the greatest philosopher. After the revolution—in the *Leviathan* he says somewhere [that] the greatest of the *ancient* philosophers is *Plato*.[v] This [is a] simple formula, [a] superficial formula, but indispensible for the change which has taken place. And Hobbes makes it clear: Plato means mathematics; Aristotle means that mathematics has a very subordinate place. Good.

So Plato is the one, and who is the other? The second great name? Because Plato is not enough for Vico. Plato[vi] is not a Renaissance Platonist at all. He needs someone else.

Student: Tacitus.

LS: Tacitus. Now this is the synthesis: the synthesis of Plato and Tacitus. What does that mean? Now Tacitus, of course, was also something very old when Vico came. When did Tacitus come to the fore? I disregard his fate in his lifetime and so, then he was practically . . . and then he

[v] Hobbes refers to Plato as "the best Philosopher of the Greeks" in *Leviathan*, chap. 46.
[vi] Strauss appears to mean "Vico."

came to us discovered, recovered in the sixteenth century. Yes, but that doesn't mean much because the humanists read all Latin books, you know . . . . But Tacitus means something much more specific at this time. In the late sixteenth century, say from roughly 1560 to 16 . . . this little thing called *Tacitismo*, "Tacitism." Well, the most famous names are Justus Lipsius, a Dutch scholar of the fifteenth century[vii], and Spinoza. But there are many names now completely forgotten who were Tacitists.

Now what does this mean? Tacitus was an historian of the Roman emperors, and the Roman emperors—that was the first time that in the civilized world there was something called absolute monarchy in large scale. Something very close to what would now be called terror, a permanent terror. Tacitus gives beautiful accounts of how this was under Vitellius and Domitian and such. And this was no longer free life, republican life. And this dissimulation was of major importance not only for subjects, but for the princes as well. And the princes couldn't tell, the emperors couldn't tell everyone—not even the Senate, perhaps least of all the Senate—what they really intended and therefore they had to do things which are called secrets of empire, *arcana imperii,* an expression of Tacitus.[19] In the sixteenth century there is a considerable literature on secrets of empire. Rules—you know,[20] these things which are now used under the heading manipulation: manipulation, simulation and dissimulation. And this went with the name of Tacitus because Tacitus supplied the best and most detailed information and reflection about that.

But Tacitus of course, while he had this influence, was not the instigator of this kind of approach to political things. There was a great political philosopher, as it were, behind the *Tacitismo* and that was Machiavelli. Machiavelli had made his *Discourses* on the basis of Livy, and this is in itself quite important. But when one studies Machiavelli *carefully*, one sees that for him he is much closer to Tacitus than he is to Livy. Livy was a patriotic Roman historian who of course could not help telling from time to time certain things about the seamy side of Roman politics, but on the main he presented it from a Roman gentleman's point of view. But still, Tacitus is ultimately more important to Machiavelli than Livy.[21] Let us then replace Tacitus by Machiavelli. Does he mention Machiavelli?

Student: Not in Part A.

LS: [22]I think he mentions him in the *New Science*, yes, but I am not quite certain.[viii] So let us think of Plato and Machiavelli. Does a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli—what could that mean? Something very simple. You see we have to replace the meaningless proper names by names for things; then it becomes meaningful. Because Plato may mean an infinite variety of things, we must know what the key point in this context is.

Student: . . . .

LS: You know, Machiavelli said this explicitly in the key chapter, *Prince*, chapter 15: that the earlier writers were concerned with how men *ought* to live and he will deal with men *truly*. Now Machiavelli, if we take this literally, simply rejects these old writers, and of whom Plato is surely the most famous. In fact it is somewhat more complicated, but let us— And he says: No; no

[vii] Strauss means the sixteenth century. Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) was a Flemish humanist.
[viii] Machiavelli is mentioned in paragraphs 1003 and 1109 of the *New Science.*

ought, only is. And the man who tries to make a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli, or Plato and Tacitus, is a man who wishes to have the best of the two worlds: of Plato's idealism and Machiavelli's realism. Now this was of course nothing new in Vico; surely Bacon tried to do such a thing, and therefore it is perfectly natural that he mentions that the synthesis of Plato and Tacitus is affected somehow or helped greatly by Bacon. [23]Still there are of course great men, apart from Plato, Tacitus. Grotius. Where does Grotius come in? What does Grotius deal with?

Student: Man and law?

LS: Well, law. Law. Now Bacon was of course a very great lawyer, as we all know; he was Lord Chancellor. But still, if you look at the body of his writings there is very little about law and much more about all kinds of other subjects. And Grotius is much more obviously a lawyer, dealing with all kinds of law: human, natural, and divine.[24]

Let me say this of Plato, Tacitus; we'll start from there. Plato [is a] philosopher; Tacitus is a historian. What Bacon tried to do in his synthesis is to bring together philosophy and history in a way in which it was not brought together before. And in this respect Vico absolutely agrees with Bacon, but Vico makes a minor—or rather, important correction of Bacon. When Bacon speaks of history he thinks chiefly, although not exclusively, of political history: that political history would give us lessons which political philosophy might not give. But Bacon thinks—what does Vico mean by history? Political history?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but much more law—the history of laws, of institutions—than political history proper. This is the great corrective. That which will make possible the new science and that synthesis of Plato and Tacitus will be the history of law and languages more than any other kind of history. This much is already implied by the names to which he refers or defers.

Now let us now consider this first part of the *Autobiography* somewhat more closely. We shall not discuss the very long introduction of 107 pages, but it wouldn't do you any harm if you were to read it because there may be some things which are helpful. And we [also] won't read[25] the Continuation by Villarosa, page 200 following, because this is not Vico himself, and we will read only what Vico himself wrote. But again, there is no law against reading it. It might even be helpful to some extent. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Do you suggest . . . that Grotius is the . . . .

LS: Well, I limited myself [to] philology also. Grotius was a famous philologist, both physical and classical. There is the old saying, in one way . . . . "Boys read Terence . . . in one way, Hugo Grotius, the great scholar, reads him a different way." So this . . . how famous he was as a scholar, a philologist. Yes, surely he was, but for Vico—surely language, and philology means language, it's very important for Vico. Yes. But much more than political history proper, you know . . . diplomatic—

Mr. Butterworth: I was just wondering if Grotius is the pivot on which Vico's emphasis on philology turns, or if it . . . .

LS: Yes, well you must also not forget that these names are symbols rather than completely lucid references.

Now this book is an autobiography. And Vico, we must say, was a philosopher. What about philosophers writing autobiographies? Let us first consider this, because autobiography is of course a form of history, a part of history, the history of this particular individual. Was Vico the first philosopher to write an autobiography? No?

Student: Augustine?

LS: Yes, but Augustine is a theologian. Philosophy is strictly integrated into the theology. And the *Confessions* were—you know, in a way it is of course an autobiography. But amongst philosophers narrowly understood, were there no philosophers who wrote autobiographies prior to this time? Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: Well, Plato, at least . . . .

LS: Yes, the *Seventh Letter* would seem to read like autobiography. And in modern times, closer to Vico? Descartes: his *Discourse on Method* is a highly fictional autobiography containing some true facts of his life. And someone else, later.

Student: Rousseau.

LS: Later. Pardon? Hobbes. Hobbes wrote both a prose and a verse *vita*. Hobbes did that. So in other words, autobiography as such is not an innovation of Vico among philosophers. But perhaps it means something special in the case of Vico. On page 113 in the second paragraph toward the end he says something—well, let us read the second half of this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "We shall not here feign what René Descartes craftily feigned as to the method of his studies simply in order to exalt his own philosophy and mathematics and degrade all the other studies included in divine and human erudition. Rather, with the candor proper to a historian, we shall narrate plainly and step by step the entire series of Vico's studies, in order that the proper and natural causes of his particular development as a man of letters may be known."[ix]

LS: So in other words, he writes this emphatically as an historian, and the purpose of the *Autobiography* is to explain the natural causes of his development as a man of letters. On page 111, let us begin at the beginning. Read the whole first paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

[ix] *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1944), 113. All references in the transcript are to this edition; page numbers are placed in parentheses following the quotation.

> Giambattista Vico was born in Naples in the year 1670 of upright parents who left a good name after them. His father was of a cheerful disposition, his mother of a quite melancholy temper; both contributed to the character of their child. He was a boy of high spirits and impatient of rest; but at the age of seven he fell head first from the top of a ladder to the floor below, and remained a good five hours without motion or consciousness. The right side of the cranium was fractured, but the skin was not broken. The fracture gave rise to a large tumor, and the child suffered much loss of blood from the many deep lancings. The surgeon, indeed, observing the broken cranium and considering the long period of unconsciousness, predicted that he would either die of it or grow up an idiot. However, by God's grace neither part of his prediction came true, but as a result of this mischance he grew up with a melancholy and irritable temperament such as belongs to men of ingenuity and depth, who, thanks to the one, are quick as lightning in perception, and thanks to the other, take no pleasure in verbal cleverness or falsehood. (111)

LS: You see—what do you learn from this in the light of the remark that he wants to give the natural causes of his particular development. So he is a man "of ingenuity and depth." How did this come?

Student: It seems to be through the many passages, the belief in chance. In this case he fell from the ladder—

LS: Yes. No, but still, before he fell[26] he had already some character owing to the genes, as they would say today, according to his inheritance. Now[27] one must be of a melancholy temper in order to be a man "of ingenuity and depth."[28] Aristotle [also] said that. Where did[29] [Vico] get it from? His mother, first; and[30] second, this mishap. The mishap because, as he says, it is on account of this mischance [that] he grew up with a melancholy temper. This is very important. So the physician was absolutely wrong, absolutely wrong that he would be an idiot: he became just the opposite. This also is quite amusing. But this inheritance and accident were of crucial importance for the development of his mind, that he had this opportunity. Yes. Now this is only an indication, and we would have to study it very carefully to see whether this account of his life in terms of natural causes is fulfilled.

Now he surely he makes it perfectly clear with no false shame[x] that he was a man, a boy of superior qualities. And was his superiority recognized by his environment? I mean, the teachers . . . would think he was a particularly gifted boy. Did they treat him in accordance with this superiority? Some, ya. But when it came to any official indication by prizes and so they treated him very badly. But I suppose he did not do anything to diminish his irritable temper. Good. But we don't have to deal with that.

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[x] That is, without false modesty.

Now the high point of his philosophic studies is Suárez.[xi] Suárez, who is generally known as the codifier of scholastic philosophy (I know that this is not universally admitted[xii]) in the early seventeenth century; a man from whom Descartes learned[31] what he knew of philosophy. But this is only temporary. Suárez he studied as a young man, but then Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. And then in—on page 115 top, let us read page 114 bottom to 115 top.

Mr. Reinken: "Just once in this time he betook himself to the Royal University of Studies, and his good genius led him into the class of Don Felice Aquadia, the excellent head lecturer on law." (114-15)

LS: Let us stop here. You see here is what was mentioned: accident. But accident, to start here, is good genes. So without any previous interest in law he just came to an interesting lecture on law, his interest was stimulated, it was beginning. So he had a certain training in metaphysics and then by accident he also stumbled into law. And this kind of thing[32] [happens], I suppose, to many people, that they do not know when they are ten years old what they will study later on. And accidents decide it.

On page 115 bottom he mentions in passing that his father was a bookseller. Notice that he didn't belong to the Neapolitan aristocracy by any means.[33] We will take up this question later, of his social status, which is not altogether irrelevant for his . . . .

Now law. And regarding law we learn something from page 116 paragraph 2, of two different forms in which one can study the law at this time[34].

Mr. Reinken: "Now in checking particularly the citations from the civil law he found a great pleasure in two things."

LS: What is civil law? What does civil law mean in such context? Roman law.

Mr. Reinken: "One was in seeing how, in their summaries of the laws, the scholastic interpreters had abstracted into general maxims of justice the particular considerations of equity which the jurisconsults and emperors had indicated for the just disposition of cases. This attracted him to these medieval interpreters—"

LS: In the original it is "to those *ancient* interpreters." The term medieval was not as much in use at that time as it is now.

Mr. Reinken: "whom he later perceived and judged to be the philosophers of natural equity. The other was in observing with what great diligence the jurisconsults themselves examined the wording of the laws, senate decrees and praetors' edicts which they interpreted. This won him to the humanist interpreters—"

[xi] Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), a Jesuit teacher and author of works on metaphysics and law.
[xii] Strauss may have used "he" as the subject of this sentence and meant "admired." Suárez was criticized by some as having strayed too far from the teachings of St. Thomas.

LS: In the original it was "to the erudite interpreters," i.e. who were not so much technical lawyers as people who had a concern with language, and elegant expression especially. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Whom he later perceived and considered to be pure historians of the Roman civil law. Each of these pleasures was a sign: the one of all the study that he was to give to investigating the principles of universal law, the other of the profit he was to derive from the Latin language, especially from the usages of Roman jurisprudence, the most difficult part of which is knowing how to define the legal terms." (116)

LS: So there are two radically different approaches to the law. The first is philosophy of natural equity, and the other is history of Roman civil law. Two radically different things, but[35] the synthesis which[36] [Vico]'s trying to achieve can be stated also in these terms. The synthesis of [the] philosophy of natural equity (you can say natural law), and [the] strictly[37] historical consideration of one particular positive law, the Roman civil law. Good. And on the next page we will find a reference to his first . . . work, *On the One Principle of Universal Law*.[xiii] So the concern with metaphysics recedes in favor of the interest in law, and the interest in law was somewhat specified here already.

On page 119, the second paragraph . . . .

Mr. Reinken:

> So it happened that living in the castle for nine years he made the greatest progress in his studies, digging into laws and canons, as his duties obliged him to. Led on from canon law to the study of dogmatic theology, he found himself in the very middle of Catholic doctrine in the matter of grace. This came about particularly through the reading of Richardus, the theologian of the Sorbonne (for he had happily brought with him this book from his father's shop). Richardus by a geometrical method shows that the doctrine of St. Augustine is midway between the two extremes of Calvin and Pelagius, and equidistant likewise from the other opinions that approach these two extremes. This disposition enabled him later to meditate a principle of the natural law of the nations, which should both be apt for the explanation of the origins of Roman law and every other gentile civil law in respect of history, and agree with the sound doctrine of grace in respect to moral philosophy.

LS: You see here also that he begins with legal studies, canon law; turn[s] then to dogmatic theology, and going through that he returns again to legal studies. The chief concern, again, is law. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "At the same time Lorenzo Valla,[xiv] by his reprehension of the Roman jurists in point of Latin elegance, led him to cultivate the study of the Latin language, beginning with the works of Cicero." (119)

[xiii] This work, the complete title of which is *On the One Principle and One End of Universal Right* (*De uno universi iuris principio et fine uno*), is part of a collection of texts that Vico called *Diritto Universale*. Vico published these texts between 1720 and 1722.

[xiv] Lorenzo Valla (c.1407-1457), an Italian humanist.

LS: But you see here also this concern with the language has also to do with his interest in law and Roman jurists. Yes.

Now he then begins to speak in the immediate sequel of another interest which has apparently nothing to do with metaphysics or theology on the one hand, and law on the other, and that is poetry. That is on the bottom of page 119 to[38] page 122 top. But if you would read that, you would see[39] again the way from poetry to law and metaphysics: again law is here in this respect central. Let us read only page 120, bottom.

Mr. Reinken: "Then, reading—"

LS: No, no; only the next sentence: "And in this study—"

Mr. Reinken: "And in this study [of] Horace's *Art of Poetry* he noticed that Roman jurisprudence was an art of equity conveyed by innumerable specific precepts of natural law which the jurists had extracted from the reasons of the laws and the intentions of the legislators." (120)

LS: Now the literal translation of what is here said to be "natural law" is "natural right." Natural justice—*Giusto naturale*. Ya.

And then the next page, the second half of the page: "But the metaphysics of Plato," to which he was led from Aristotle whom he rejected.

Mr. Reinken: "But the metaphysics of Plato leads to a metaphysical principle—"

LS: This is, I am sure, an error in the original—at least in that edition of the original which I use. That is "physical" principle. It must be a mistake. I haven't looked up the critical edition. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "which is the eternal idea, drawing out and creating matter from itself, like a seminal spirit that forms its own egg." (121)

LS: Whereas Aristotle is a dualist who has form and matter, that's the idea, which is lower. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "In conformity with this metaphysic he founds a moral philosophy on an ideal or architectonic virtue or justice. Consequently he devoted himself to meditating an ideal commonwealth, to which he gave, in his laws, an equally ideal justice. So that—"

LS: So you see again his interest in the metaphysics of Plato, culminates in an interest in Platonic politics which is, of course, closer to law than metaphysics as such. Yes. I think we should read the rest of this paragraph. "So that from the time—

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

> So that from the time that Vico felt himself dissatisfied with the metaphysic of Aristotle as an aid to the understanding of moral philosophy, and found himself

> instructed by that of Plato, there began to dawn on him, without being aware of it, the thought of meditating an ideal eternal law that should be observed in a universal city after the idea or design of providence, upon which idea have since been founded all the commonwealths of all times and all nations. This was the ideal republic that Plato should have contemplated as a consequence of his metaphysic; but he was shut off from it by ignorance of the fall of the first man. (121-22)

LS: This was discussed by Father Warren. Now how do we have to understand that? By the way, this manuscript uses the word—"idea" is of course the old Platonic term, but "ideal," the adjective—as far as I remember, the adjective was coined in the seventeenth century by a Jesuit, some Italian or Spanish Jesuit—Lana,[xv] if I remember this correctly. So the adjective "ideal" doesn't exist before, but in Vico's time it exists already. So one can of course then say [that] what Plato presents in the *Republic* is an ideal commonwealth. But this ideal commonwealth of Plato is very different from Vico's ideal commonwealth, because Vico's ideal commonwealth will be a sequence of various conditions of man; whereas in Plato it is *the* perfect condition. This is of course very important. And according to Vico's interpretation, the difference between him and Plato is due to the fact that Plato was ignorant of the fall of the first man. But can we understand that difference also independently of Vico's Christian faith? Because, after all, his doctrine of this ideal commonwealth is not meant to be a Christian doctrine, in itself, but is a purely philosophic doctrine. I mean, what would be the non-Christian equivalent of the doctrine of the fall of man?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . the age of Chronos . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Butterworth: The age of Chronos, the Golden Age, when—

LS: Yes, but to what extent, to what extent does the age of Chronos, the Golden Age, play a role in that?

Mr. Butterworth: There's a myth in one of the dialogues where he gave Chronos' details and then . .. .

LS: . . . .

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, yes.

LS: Yes. Now, there exists—Mr. Flaumenhaft?

Student: It would seem that in Plato, you're dealing with people who are already men, really, sort of civilized, whereas in Vico you're starting from men before they . . . .

[xv] Strauss apparently refers to the Italian Jesuit, Francesco Lana de Terzi (1631-1687).

LS: So Plato, in other words, presupposes fully developed human beings—let us say perfect human beings. All right? And Vico presupposes very imperfect human beings. Where does the Bible stand regarding this question? Perfect or imperfect? Of course man was created perfect: but the Fall. Now Vico deals in his philosophic work only with men, with the gentiles, i.e. with men after: fallen men, corrupt men. To that extent the Hobbean or Epicurean premise externally agrees with the biblical view. You know? This I think we must keep in mind.

Now at any rate Vico is from the very beginning—his chief interest is in law (both natural and divine and human) and in society; and this is a reason, the sufficient reason, why he was not interested in the Stoics and the Epicureans, as he makes clear in the immediate sequel.[40] I think this [has been] [41]frequently asserted up to the present day, that the Stoics and the Epicureans were so-called individualists i.e. not concerned with society and the good order of society, but only with the well-being of the individual. By the way, is this view true historically of Epicureans and Stoics? It's not terribly important, but it's just to have some distance from Vico. Yes?

Student: . . . stoics . . . society . . . Marcus Aurelius . . . .

LS: Yes, sure. It is complicated, one can understand that men have the impression that the Stoics were so-called individualists, but there is also much evidence to the contrary. It is true only in the case of the Epicureans who were simply disinterested in matters political. Yes?

Student: Marcus Aurelius said . . . .

LS: Now[42] one knows a bit about the original Stoics: Marcus Aurelius is very late, as you know, second century A.D. But the early Stoics, say in the fourth century and third century, one knows a bit about them and they have a political doctrine. Whether it is a very good one is another matter, but they are surely interested in politics. But this only in passing.

Then there is another point, which I cannot interpret properly but which must be of some interest. He is somewhat distrustful of algebra. Let us read page 124, bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

> The other practice consists in teaching youth the elements of the science of magnitudes by the algebraic method. For this numbs all that is most exuberant in youthful natures: it obscures their imagination, enfeebles their memory, renders their perception sluggish, and slackens their understanding. And these four things are all most necessary for the culture of the best humanity: the first for painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry and eloquence; the second for learning languages and history; the third for inventions; and the fourth for prudence. But this algebra seems to be an Arabic device for reducing the natural signs of magnitudes to certain ciphers of will. Thus the signs for numbers, which among the Greeks and Latins had been the letters[xvi], which in both are regular geometric lines,—were reduced by the Arabs to ten minute ciphers. (124-25)

[xvi] Here the reader omits an editorial addition, "[of their alphabets]." As noted in the Editorial Headnote, not all of the reader's departures from the class texts will receive a footnote. He will

LS: Thank you. Now in science we have for the first time numbers. [43]Algebra was the great science developed in the seventeenth century, the new mathematics: this is simply rejected by Vico. He notes it in passing. It is more important for us to see here—but he never really studied it because—even he studied mathematics. And eventually when he did, he thought the only advantage of having learned how geometricians proceed in their reasoning was that if he ever had occasion to reason in *that manner* he would know how. That's all.

Now on the same page, when he comes to speak, "And though Epicurus"—on the same page, 126,[44] [in] the second paragraph, line seven from the end.

Mr. Reinken: "And though Epicurus had no knowledge even of geometry, yet, by a well-ordered deduction, he built on his mechanical physics a metaphysics entirely sensualistic just like that of John Locke, and a hedonistic morality suitable for men who are to live in solitude, as indeed he enjoined upon all his disciples." (126)

LS: Yes, this is a quite revealing remark. Superficially stated,[45] [Epicurus] is a *sensualist*, meaning a man who traces all knowledge to sense perception, just as Locke [did]. But then Epicurus has another thing, he has a morality of a certain kind, a hedonistic morality. So has Locke. But he alludes here to the key difference between Locke and Epicurus. Although they had both a hedonistic morality. But read it again: "hedonistic morality—"

Mr. Reinken: "suitable for men who are to live in solitude, as indeed he" – Epicurus – "enjoined upon all his disciples."

LS: Yes, what did Locke do with that? Did he also—I believe it's not good; it's too[xvii] . . . . Now here this point is very important: Locke and Epicurus agree regarding a hedonistic morality, but what's the difference?[46] Vico doesn't say it in so many words but he makes it quite clear.

Student: . . . .

LS: Sure. Yes. So, good. Therefore one could say provisionally that the modern Epicureans, like Locke, are political Epicureans—political, whereas the old ones were non-political or they were even anti-political, and that is, I think, quite true. Quite true. The ancient Epicureans were on the whole simply apolitical men. The modern Epicureans, the modern sense of the hedonists, were most emphatically political. Think of what is understood today by a liberal, I mean in the crude language of the daily papers: let us establish a paradise on earth, meaning let us have the maximum of body enjoyment universally. Hedonism, but possible only as a social enterprise, whereas the older Epicureans simply said: We don't want comfort because solitude is much, much more comfortable than any comfort we obtain by social enterprise. That is important and we should be cognizant of that. Yes?

Student: . . . .

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generally, as here, skip bracketed editorial material inserted into the text by Bergin and Fisch. We will generally note only such cases as are important for the class discussion.

[xvii] Here Strauss is making a comment about the translation.

LS: You must speak louder.

Student: Those who believe they can ignore the social aspect of Epicureanism, because there is a whole tradition before them . . . . calling materialists by the name of Epicureans. Whether they were Epicurean or not materialists . . . used the word "Epicurean."

LS: Yes, but I think they all were not—they're socially indifferent.

Student: Do you think they were socially indifferent?

LS: Ya, ya. They wanted to be let alone, to live in their gardens. Gardens didn't mean elaborate establishments which cost a lot of money, but—

Student: Am I pushing it too hard if I say that in order to have gardens they would have to have political life.

LS: In a way, yes, and this is perhaps the most obvious defect of Epicureanism, that it did not sufficiently reflect on the necessity of police, to put it on the lowest level. And that was Hobbes' point: the first thing you need are policemen, and that means a state. That you can say; but I suppose they simply said: Well, you know, there is the other respect here of the existence of police because they want to have their property fully protected and we will . . . . So the position is nicely and clearly discussed in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* II:1 . . . . the hedonist says: Well, I want to be a stranger everywhere without any citizen's obligations in any way. . . . In other words: No, you haven't thought about that. Good. So I would say that a political hedonism, the principle of political hedonism, is a modern phenomenon; and the name for that, the very dignified name of that you have heard it *n* times, is economics. Because economics has to do primarily of course with the production of goods which the body enjoys . . . . And therefore there was no political economy in antiquity because people were either hedonists and then certainly non-social, non-political, to the extent to which it was possible; or they were "quote idealists." But political economy required both motivations: pleasure plus society. One could say with some justice that the first man who stated such a thesis of political hedonism was Sir Thomas More in the *Utopia*, but this would not be very helpful. But at first glance he seems to say that. Now first Mr. . . . .

Student: Couldn't the sophists in some sense be considered political too?

LS: Pardon?

Student: Could not the sophists be considered in some sense political too?

LS: No, because—well, you know sophism is very difficult; we know it almost exclusively from Plato and to some extent from Aristotle, i.e. from people opposed to[47] [the sophists]. But now it depends very much [on] what trust you have in Plato's and Aristotle's decency. I have a very high trust, so I believe it. But many scholars say Plato and Aristotle were kind of partisan fanatics against them, and then they tried to put together a different picture. If one takes Plato's

and Aristotle's view, one arrives at the conclusion that the sophists, properly so called, were non-political men; but they had to live, and they tried to make a living by teaching other people—non-sophists, ordinary citizens—the things which these men believed to need, i.e. the art of speaking. And this art of speaking is of course primarily a political art.[48] [In this] invalid way they became concerned with politics, but not strictly speaking. Aristotle says very clearly that the sophists are people who reduce political science to rhetoric, i.e. they do not have a political science properly. And I believe that is correct. But [that] they speak about politics to some extent is true, but that doesn't make them political thinkers proper. One can say a—I would say that a political thinker is a man who is public spirited. Does this make sense? If you regard the public affairs only as a kind of nuisance and you develop perhaps the technique of evading them, that doesn't make—and this was what . . . that doesn't make you a political thinker. Plato and Aristotle—these people and the Stoics too, they were public spirited. Yes?

Student: But what about the men who were students of the sophists—

LS: But these were citizens, Athenian citizens, who needed tools and they took them where they could get them. And they—are you in the course on the *Gorgias*?

Student: Yes.

LS: Well, Callicles is such a man. Callicles is not a sophist. He despised the sophists. He is an Athenian general. But he has to learn to speak, and he can learn it much better if he goes to a paid teacher where he can ask all kinds of questions than merely to talk to an older gentleman who is a reputed orator—say, like Pericles. Pericles wouldn't have time to tell him and he would also have other reasons for not telling him why he is such a terrific rhetorical—

[change of tape]

—these aren't the sophists.

Student: But couldn't he be considered a political . . . .

LS: In a way, yes. but this is not entirely clear to him; I mean, you know, he is not a, how should I say, a principled hedonist. And a very simple truth would be that, from a Socratic and extremely stern point of view, there can be [what is] called hedonism, as we shall see in the *Gorgias*. But what is the key word for such people? Not pleasure; that's not their word. But it can come out when they are put under[49] electrical[xviii] pressure. The key word is power and glory. That's something—political economy says very little about glory. They ask about power sometimes, but about glory, that is not an economic concept. And glory is *the* key concept for the ancient political man. Glory and honor. This is—I mean, as I say, in a school you may be able to show that glory is also one kind of pleasure, but that is not very plausible because they choose terrific pains: of war, of navigation through unknown seas, which is the opposite of pleasure. It's for the sake of glory. Mr. . . . ?

[xviii] This indeed appears to be what Strauss said.

Student: What did you mean by political economy when you said that it didn't exist in antiquity?

LS: Yes, that is a statement in need of . . . . Let us first look at the name. What does economy mean, or *œconomia*? Management of the household. Good. Now they knew of course that there was such a thing as . . . it wasn't called that[50] but they spoke of income and expenditure. For example, in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* Book III, chapter 6, and which is repeated with slight modifications in the[xix] chapter of the First Book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. This is one item; everyone knew that. And when you read Thucydides, you see that men like Pericles were concerned with revenue and expenditure. But no one thought of it in terms of the *economy* of the polis. Here and there there is perhaps . . . . But the very term "political economy" I believe emerges only in the eighteenth century: originally, it was called political arithmetic, which shows the absence of the term "political economy" in antiquity.

Student: Would you consider the *Œconomicus* a book of political economy?

LS: Aristotle's *Œconomicus* or Xenophon's?

Student: Xenophon's.

LS: And also the same would be true of Aristotle's. That is a teaching of the management of the household considered from a political point of view. That you can say, but that doesn't make it a political economy. Yes? Fine.

Now there is something of some importance, it seems, on the next page. I think you should just go on where we left off on page 126, bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

> And to give him [Epicurus][xx] his due, Vico followed his explanation of the forms of corporeal nature with as much delight as he felt ridicule or pity on seeing him under the hard necessity of going off into a thousand inanities and absurdities to explain the operations of the human mind. This reading therefore served only to confirm him still further in the doctrines of Plato, who from the very form of our human mind, without any hypothesis, establishes the eternal idea as the principle of all things on the basis of the knowledge and consciousness that we have of ourselves. (126-27)

LS: He gives in brackets the Italian words, *scienza e conscienza*. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "For in our mind there are certain eternal truths which we cannot mistake or deny, and which are, therefore, not of our making."

[xix] Strauss may mean *Rhetoric* I.4, which notes many of the same points made by Socrates in Xenophon's presentation of his conversation with Glaucon in *Memorabilia* III.6.

[xx] Mr. Reinken's interpolation.

LS: "Which do not stem from us" would be a more literal translation, lest we mistake this for the other doctrine.[xxi] But it is also an earlier statement anyway. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "But for the rest, we feel the liberty by thinking them to make all the things that are dependent on the body, and therefore we make them in time, that is when we choose to turn our attention to them, and we make them all by thinking them and contain them all within ourselves. For example, we make images by imagination, recollections by memory, passions by appetite; smells, tastes, colors, sounds and touches by the senses; and all these things we contain within us." (127)

LS: Now we must keep this in mind; that must be be very important for later, what he understands by "making." In what sense do we make our—these tastes, smells, and colors? We surely don't make them in the way in which we make chairs or blackboards.[51] Apparently this is a transition to his notion of our making of institutions at all times. We must keep this in mind as a very problematic sentence. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "But for the eternal truths which are not of our making"—

LS: Literally: "which do not stem from us."

Reinken: Which do not stem from us, "and have no dependence on our bodies, we must conceive as principle of all things an eternal idea altogether separate from body, which, in its consciousness, when it wills, creates all things in time and contains them within itself, and by containing them sustains them. By this—" (127)

LS: Let's leave it at this. I thought we should at least continue there. If I understand this page correctly, he wants to say that everything dependent on our bodies is our work, as distinguished from the eternal idea. Everything that depends on our bodies only, which is of course something very different from what we would ordinarily mean by our making—think only of images: in what sense do we make images, as distinguished from deliberate fictions? When I put together a horse and a man and make a centaur, I cannot be said to have made it. But if I have some vision, did I make it? This is a long question, we must leave here no sufficient space for judgment.

Now on the next page he speaks of the new experimental physics—Robert Boyle is the name—and makes clear he has no interest in it because of its irrelevance for the understanding of man and of law. This is not important right now.

Page 130, well, he always speaks against Descartes. You must not forget that at that time the most famous philosopher all over Europe after Aristotle's demise was Descartes, and Descartes is the primary target. And he—you know, on page 130 he says that he regards even Epicurus as superior to Descartes, which is quite a thing. And then he speaks of the decay of metaphysics and other things in the early eighteenth century, due to Descartes. He concludes his remark at the beginning of the second paragraph on page 133.

[xxi] Strauss apparently refers to Vico's doctrine that humans can only know what they have themselves made, and that they make the civil but not the natural world.

Mr. Reinken: "So for all these reasons Vico blessed his good fortune in having no teacher whose words he had sworn by, and he felt most grateful for those woods in which, guided by his good genius, he had followed the main course of his studies untroubled by sectarian prejudice; for in the city taste in letters changed every two or three years like styles in dress." (133)

LS: That's so true. Now but one can also say in the context [that] the decay of philosophic studies in the early eighteenth century was a good fortune for Vico because it gave him an opportunity to develop his own thought with nothing taken away[52] [from] his thoughts by others. Then he turns for some time—page 137—wholly to the profession of humane letters: 138, paragraph 3. That is the key passage[53] [with] which we are concerned.

Mr. Reinken: "Up to this time Vico had admired two only above all other learned men: Plato and Tacitus; for with an incomparable metaphysical mind Tacitus contemplates man as he is, Plato as he should be." (138)

LS: Now this is Machiavelli's formula. And it is also clear that Vico tries to make a synthesis of the study of man as he is: Machiavelli[xxii] and of man as he should be: Plato. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> And, as Plato with his universal knowledge explores the parts of nobility which constitute the man of intellectual wisdom, so Tacitus descends into all the counsels of utility whereby, among the infinite irregular chances of malice and fortune, the man of practical wisdom brings things to good issue. Now Vico's admiration of these two great authors from this point of view was a foreshadowing of that plan on which he later worked out an ideal eternal history to be traversed by the universal history of all times, carrying out on it, by certain eternal properties of civil affairs, the development, acme and decay of all nations. From this it follows that the wise man should be formed both of esoteric wisdom such as Plato's— (138-39)

LS: *Riposta* in Italian. How shall we—"esoteric" is a bit strong, a bit technical; "secret"; the mode—no, the mode or something.

Mr. Reinken: "Recondite"?

LS: Ya, "recondite," ya.[xxiii]

Mr. Reinken: "both of recondite wisdom such as Plato's and of common wisdom such as that of Tacitus. And now at length Vico's attention was drawn to Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, a man of incomparable wisdom both common and recondite." (139)

[xxii] The context might suggest that Strauss meant to say "Tacitus" instead of "Machiavelli," but he suggested above that it is possible to substitute Machiavelli for Tacitus in this regard.

[xxiii] Both the reader and Strauss will follow this amended translation of "*riposta*" for the duration of the course.

LS: So in other words, Bacon has both, whereas Plato and Tacitus have only one part. So this is, I think, all that we need from this passage. Some comment on that we find on the next page, 140. And let us read this passage in the second paragraph: "How"—[54]what he found out; in his speech of 1699. "How Socrates"—let us read this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "How Socrates did not so much bring down moral philosophy from heaven as elevate our spirit to it, and how those who for their inventions were raised to heaven among the gods are but the intelligence which each of us possesses." (140)

LS: Ya, what does this mean? Is this the correction of the famous statement of Cicero, that Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven? Philosophy—here Vico narrows it down to moral philosophy. Now what does this mean? Moral philosophy is something high, not something low. Cicero's statement implies that the highest things are the natural, the divine things. Cicero says that Socrates brought philosophy *down* from heaven and introduced it into cities and houses of men. So here, moral philosophy, political philosophy—no, these are very high things, the highest things for Vico. And secondly, there is also an indication of the view of the equality of all men. As you see here, the men who for their inventions were raised to heaven among the gods are but the intelligence which each of us possesses. So it is only the exercise of these common gifts, and not the gifts themselves, which are unequal. In the immediate sequel he speaks of the harmony between letters and political power. In other words, [a] high development of letters goes together with the power of the community, and not the opposite. Now this is a complicated question—you would have to apply this to Naples: whether Naples was then— or Italy altogether was so powerful. Of course the Spanish monarchy, which Naples was under, was still rather powerful at that time, but not Italy as such, so that would be a question. Mr. Miller, you wanted to say something?

Mr. Miller: Bacon's essay on . . . wisdom of the ancients.

LS: What does he say? What does Bacon say on that point?

Mr. Miller: I did not notice it before . . . .

LS: Yes, I do not remember what Bacon said . . . . Mr. Nicgorski?

Mr. Nicgorski: This statement that Socrates did not so much bring down moral philosophy from heaven . . . couldn't we understand that to be the specific instance of the world of human possibilities, as Vico understands it, developing—the gentile nations growing into things, rather than Cicero's understanding the constancy of human nature?

LS: Ya, that could also be, ya.

Now let me see whether there is something which we need. Yes, I think this we should consider on page 153, in connection with his study of Bacon, in the first paragraph near the middle: "This debate was carried on honorably by both parties and concluded with good grace." Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> This debate was carried on honorably by both parties and concluded with good grace. But the dissatisfaction with grammatical etymologies which Vico had begun to feel was an indication of the source whence later, in the most recent works, he was to recover the origins of languages, deriving them from a principle of nature common to all on which he establishes the principles of a universal etymology to determine the origins of all languages living or dead. And his slight satisfaction with Bacon's book attempting to trace the wisdom of the ancients in the fables of the poets, was a sign of the source whence Vico, also in his latest works, was to recover principles of poetry different from those which the Greeks and Latins and the others since them have hitherto accepted. On these he establishes the only principles of mythology according to which the fables bore historical evidence as to the first Greek commonwealths, and by their aid he explains all the fabulous history of the heroic commonwealths. (153)

LS: Now what does this mean?[55] Mr. Miller knows what Bacon did in his work *On the Wisdom of the Ancients*. Do you remember what Bacon does there? Because Vico was dissatisfied with it, and that[56] became crucially important.

Mr. Miller: He refers to it earlier as more ingenious than true, the attempt to reveal the secrets of the universe through myths—

LS: In other words, Bacon asserted—whether he believed it entirely or not is a long question—that the old myths, the early myths of the Greeks, contained the most profound wisdom, and he found all the profound teachings of philosophy in these old stories. And Vico rejects that. This rejection is decisive for him, it is not a minor matter because if we take Bacon seriously he means that very early men were very wise men, philosophers. Men in the very early—say, roughly at the beginning, were philosophers. Vico rejects that: they were absolute savages; there is no recondite wisdom there. But these fables or myths are of immense importance because they throw light, if properly read, on the early commonwealth, and we can understand the character of early men by studying these myths—of course not as giving us historical information about these early men, but about their way of thinking. They reveal to us what now would be called the mythical mind, and then we understand how mankind started, that philosophy is not, as it were, at the beginning but rather at the end.

This, therefore, is the same question which we discussed last time . . . regarding natural law. The natural law that is taught in the Schools is according to Vico a philosopher's law, and therefore unknown to early men. The same is true of these other forms of wisdom, as to be found—allegedly found in the myths. The beginnings were "quote primitive unquote." They were poor, savage, and therefore the whole tradition and so on. And hitherto the great poets, especially Homer, were regarded as wise men; not only by Bacon but by the whole tradition. That's nonsense: Homer is not a wise man: he is, as it were—he is a kind of very early minstrel who, without his intention, conveys to us invaluable information about the very early heroic age of Greece—which is today of course absolutely acceptable. Pure twentieth century.

Student: Give me an example, will you, of this information conveyed accidentally. It sounds terribly historicist.

LS: Ya, sure, it—

Student: . . . .

LS: No. Well, you read Homer, yes? The story of Achilles and so on. The first[57] [thing to] do is simply to read it, to enjoy it—which I believe quite a few people still can. But for some of us it is a real difficulty. For example, neat description of killings: how he hit him, technically correct**,** so that he was dead—this kind of thing. But other things, you know, I think everyone enjoys. But it was understood, at least in the time you know anything about[58], that Homer is not merely to be read for enjoyment, but also for being enlightened. The crude view was [that] you find all the arts from Homer—especially of course the most interesting art, of a general, and of a fighter. You find reference to that in Plato. The more refined view was that Homer has hidden thoughts, thoughts which are expressed only by a story, and you have to transform the story into that thought which it conveys, in order to understand. That is also clearly present at the time of Plato. Now somewhat later there emerged a school called the Stoics, to whom people ordinarily address the use of the so-called allegorical method, which [is] when Zeus is not this particular god, but is, say, the ruler of the world, and Hera is—I don't know what she is, but every—you know, is some principle . . . and this is [the] so-called allegorical. Now such things were prevalent throughout the ages up to Vico's time. Today, the majority of scholars throws out all notions, not only of allegorical interpretations, but also of some thought which Homer . . . profound thought which he conveys. The view now prevailing of is this is . . . sung by minstrels, and people say: Go only to Yugoslavia; there are still such minstrels. And what they do—what Homer did was only that he put them together on a chain, as it were, and whether he did this well or ill, that is a moot question. But that's all there is to it. In other words, what he conveys and what he wishes to convey apart from enjoyment are only these simple, heroic feelings of a warlike early nobility. That's all there is to it. Of course there are wonderful incidents there. But not . . . that's the key point. And Vico was *the* man, more than anyone else, to shape this view that poetry is a form of conveying wisdom, a particularly period form of conveying wisdom. In our age there are some people, along with the poets (I have heard that), who are recovering in a very indirect way this older view of poetry; not identical to it, but something like it. But this is today the common view—I mean, Hesiod: Well, he's a peasant from Boetia and[59] he conveys a kind of peasant morality that's in all of the histories, connected with some autobiographical details—he had troubles with a nasty brother, that's all in—[60] Yes?

Student: My problem is that—

LS: Is poetry wisdom? That was the older view. Or is poetry pleasing unwisdom? And Vico says[61] pleasing unwisdom, but which has however a significance for wisdom, not because it is pleasant but because in its unwisdom it conveys invaluable information about a forgotten stratum of human development. And of course Homer didn't write these things so that present-day historians can find out something about Greece at that time; in fact that is purely accidental. But to us historians it's an immensely valuable contribution of Homer. But at any rate, in this respect Vico really made an epoch.

Student: Isn't this rejection then purely on the basis of technology?

LS: Not quite. No, you must see all of the things are not so simple . . . . The[62] importance of Homer, and everything of this in the western tradition, is zero compared to the influence of the Bible. And the real history of allegorical interpretation is of course much more in the Bible than in Homer—it is much more interesting, much more powerful. Now what happened in the sixteenth, seventeenth century, in connection with—ya, coming from Protestantism, but more at the margins of Protestantism. Did you ever hear of the Socinians?

Student: . . . .

LS: And then the people who are still more, shall I say, to the left than Socinians, people like Hobbes and Spinoza. The key point is: *literally*, literally: no allegorical interpretation. And so—well, the Protestant construction was this: the pure word of God, no human invention; and if the letter doesn't say so, it's pure invention. That was the simple. . . . So this whole fight was of the gravest importance in the sixteenth, seventeenth century and what Vico does in a way[63], as Croce for example has seen, is to do to Homer what Spinoza has done to the Old Testament. Well, and . . . of course strange things in the Old Testament. For example I have heard with my own ears when I was a young student, " . . . older scholar interpreting a psalm . . . so the text must be corrupt." Good And also apparently there is said the spirit of God, yes?—literally the wind of God. Of course it means the wind of God [and] not the spirit of God. So, read Spinoza. This teaching happened before, and here of course the intention was quite clear: to deprive the Bible of its authority. It's a document of a very primitive nation in a very primitive state and not *the* book of wisdom. Ya? And this was applied to Homer here.

Student: This is why—

LS: And of course the other side of the matter is only that very soon people came and said: Of course the Bible is not wisdom, but to say what Spinoza says and . . . this is preposterous. It is *poetry*. But poetry means, by definition, not wisdom. Beautiful to the ear and great sentiments. This remained, in a way, up to the present day. Some changes have taken place in our century; there are some . . . here who understand poetry again in a somewhat different way.

Student: But then the argument is essentially [this]: Because these words can be broken down into very primitive meanings, and because of our etymological tools we know they have to be broken down into those, therefore they can't have any intelligence—

LS: You see, the point of this is that in the tradition, both theological and humanistic, the allegorical interpretation was surely overdone, yes? And therefore there was some justification for a reaction against that.

Student: But many times people who use . . . they use this very literal interpretation to bolster up the divine . . . arguing against allegorical interpretation—

LS: Well, again—for example, you mean for example the allegorical interpretation of miracles. To get rid of miracles . . . .

Student: Miracles or . . . .

LS: But still, to come back only to the key point. What these men were doing, and what Vico promoted by extending it to non-biblical literature, Homer especially, was this notion of, not that men have imperfect beginnings and savage beginnings—this was beside the point—but whether such a document like Homer is a document of savagery, you see, and not . . . . I mean they were probably very savage beings—[that] may very well be; but it is then an empirical question to say: A book like Homer, a book like the Bible, does this belong to this age of our modest, bestial ancestors—how do they call it? You know they have an expression for[64] [the men] who still didn't have a real brain, a human brain. How do they call this kind of man between Neanderthal and the homo sapiens? I don't know, there are quite a few. But let us not lose ourselves in details which are not important. The key point of the . . . is the reinterpretation of Homer and all earlier accounts of the Western world, and also the Roman stories and . . . . I'm simply saying, truth—if not [65]when Livy speaks of Romulus and Remus and this famous stuff—they don't mean anything, but they reflect in an indirect way the way of looking at things not of the Romans in Romulus' time but the way of the Romans in 300 B.C. They viewed their past this way—of course wholly erroneously—but since we know so little about their way of thinking we can indirectly establish it. Good. Fine.

Now there is one more passage which we should discuss, and that is on the next page 154, bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

> While preparing to write this life [of Marshal Carafa][xxiv] Vico found himself obliged to read Hugo Grotius *On the Law of War and Peace*. And here he found a fourth author to add to the three he had set before himself. For Plato adorns rather than confirms his recondite[xxv] wisdom with the common wisdom of Homer. Tacitus intersperses his metaphysics, ethics and politics with the facts, as they have come down to him from the times, scattered and confused and without system. Bacon sees that the sum of human and divine knowledge of his time needs supplementing and emending, but as far as laws are concerned he does not succeed with his canons in compassing the universe of cities and the course of all times, or the extent of all nations. Grotius, however, embraces in a system of universal law the whole of philosophy and philology, including both parts of the latter, the history on the one hand of facts and events, both fabulous and real, and on the other of the three languages— (154-55)

LS: The history of the three languages, ya.

Student: Yes.

LS: Ya. So in other words in one respect Grotius comes closer to what Vico did than any other. This is what he said in 1725; I am doubtful whether this is his last word on this particular subject. Yes?

[xxiv] Mr. Reinken's interpolation.

[xxv] In Bergin and Fisch: esoteric

Mr. Butterworth: One . . . question: the English text reads: "the universal law of all of philosophy and of philology," and the Italian text reads "philosophy and theology." Now—

LS: Who reads?

Mr. Butterworth: The Italian texts reads, "philosophy and theology."

LS: I see; I did not know.

Reader: It must be philology; it makes sense—

LS: Who has the translation? Which edition? Well, perhaps you have a bad edition.

Mr. Butterworth: It's Croce's edition . . . Greek philology

LS: I think it makes more sense, yes. Well we'll leave it at this. Next time, Mr. Reinken will give us a report about the next part. And a week from today also we can begin with the *New Science*.

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[1] Deleted "to."
[2] Deleted "we."
[3] Deleted "the—."
[4] Deleted "you make—."
[5] Deleted "Vico—."
[6] Deleted "so."
[7] Deleted "this distinction."
[8] Deleted "in."
[9] Deleted "more—."
[10] Deleted "we have of course"
[11] Deleted "we—."
[12] Deleted "what."
[13] Deleted "from."
[14] Deleted "they learned—."
[15] Deleted "was not"
[16] Deleted "So—."
[17] Deleted "But when was this, still—."
[18] Deleted "one."
[19] Deleted "And this—."
[20] Deleted "how you can—."
[21] Deleted "And now what is then—If we limit ourselves—Now we have—."
[22] Deleted "I don't—."
[23] Deleted "ya but then"
[24] Deleted "In the—."
[25] Moved "also."
[26] Deleted "also."
[27] Deleted "melancholy people of a melancholy temper—."
[28] Moved "Also."
[29] Deleted "he."
[30] Deleted "the."
[31] Deleted "his—."
[32] Deleted "which happens."
[33] Deleted "He—."

[34] Deleted “of” and moved “his.”
[35] Moved “Vico.”
[36] Deleted “he.”
[37] Deleted “historically.”
[38] Deleted “the.”
[39] Deleted “that.”
[40] Deleted “and this you find—.”
[41] Deleted “is”
[42] Deleted “in addition—I mean.”
[43] Deleted “so he”
[44] Deleted “on.”
[45] Deleted “Locke.”
[46] Deleted “According to—.”
[47] Deleted “them.”
[48] Deleted “To that—.”
[49] Deleted “the.”
[50] Deleted “way.”
[51] Deleted “This is—.”
[52] Deleted “of.”
[53] Deleted “to.”
[54] Deleted “what he found out in this—.”
[55] Deleted “Do you—.”
[56] Deleted “was—.”
[57] Deleted “you can.”
[58] Deleted “it.”
[59] Deleted “these are just—.”
[60] Deleted “This is—.”
[61] Deleted “unpleasing—[laughs] no.”
[62] Deleted “most—the.”
[63] Deleted “the.”
[64] Deleted “that—you know, who could—.”
[65] Deleted “when Homer”

Session 3: October 7, 1963

Leo Strauss: . . . Now, you begin your paper very well, incredibly interesting.[i] I will come back to the beginning of your paper.[1] It was so attractive to me because it was based in each case on the specific evidence of the *Autobiography*. The more you proceeded the more you lost this footing in . . . . I know you referred here and there but you must admit. . . .

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: Yes, I know. Now then we come into very great difficulty because there is a disproportion between the empirical pages of your paper and the very broad critical attacks . . . . Now when you say that this work of Vico is anti-philosophic, I believe I understand what you mean by that, but it is a very . . . . because it really implies, as you know, a denial of the philosophic character of all, or almost all of modern philosophy. This is, I[2] [won't] say absurd, but this is a tall order . . . . For example, when you state, Vico understands by nature the nationality, the birth, the origin, the beginnings, and nature should also mean development. Apart from the fact that Vico does not mean by *natura* . . . . Well, this is exactly what Hobbes, for example, did—and Locke: the state of nature, the early things. The original state, the imperfect original state. So of course by the same[3] question. But this is not a peculiarity of Vico; by the same act you treat also Hobbes, Locke, and so on and so on. Good.

Now . . . . Then[4] you have a point which is peculiar to Vico and surely not Hobbean: the knowledge of the particular: philology. But to what extent does Vico demand knowledge of everything? Because knowledge of everything is strictly speaking impossible because it is infinite. But to what extent does he do that? Or even if he was much more confident in his knowledge of particulars than philosophers generally were, why is he interested? I mean due to what does he study all these little things, of linguistics, and coins, and what have you? Why does he do that? In order to ascend from them on a broad empirical process, to arrive at what he calls the eternal law of nations. You know? And this of course is meant to be a new kind of natural law in the sense of modern science . . . .

So, natural: that is what is universal and not limited to the origins, but precisely the way from the beginning to the end . . . . Savage beginnings . . . through the whole process. This is the natural process. And this he wants to establish by . . . . So I think you have gone somewhat far. But this is not to deny that—yes. Now when you say that the[5] anti-philosophic character of his attack on natural rights, because this becomes identical, this notion of natural right, with the question of the origin. There is some truth in that; there is no question. But on the other hand. the question of the origins is not so unimportant, so unphilosophic as you . . . it. I believe when we turn to certain key passages in the *New Science* itself you will find an amazing similarity between certain points which Vico makes there and what Plato does in the *Laws*—because the *Republic*, and especially this half of the *Republic* which we considered,[6] [is] not the only part of Plato's teaching. So these things all need considerable qualification in order to be . . . .

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[i] Strauss comments on Mr. Reinken's paper, read at the start of the session. The reading was not recorded.

But I do not deny—I assert—that your paper was what they call brilliant. But that's a very dangerous concept. Very dangerous, you know? In other words, you have imagination, you see things which quite a few people would not see. But sometimes one sees also such things by what they call extra-sensory perception.

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: No, no. I know. That's the reason I am very pleased with your paper. But I have also to prevent misunderstanding on the part of [the others], especially of the new students. I have also to use a certain police function. [Laughter] And now when you said for example that his doctrine of providence looks to you like a Platonic coloring of an intrinsically Lucretian doctrine, I believe that here you are on the right path, but it would need some arguing. And this of course is the objection which I would raise generally: you have not studied the *New Science* itself, but you have looked at it.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Yes, well, but still you have looked at it. This is a part of the justification because this book is, of course, insufficient to give a notion of . . . .

Now I will come back to what I regarded as the best part of the paper. And this part persuaded me very much. I confess that I read the book—the *Autobiography*— . . . but that doesn't mean very much. Because scholars have been interested in the most uninteresting things . . . they swallow dust most of the time, there's no doubt about that. But I was not attracted by this. When I read Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, it is a sheer joy to read it, even at the first reading and still more at the end of it. But this is not a joy—I mean it gives an impression of a novel; that was my impression. But it can be somewhat petty, you know, always looking up to these big shots, the counts, and princes, and what have you, and immensely pleased if he is not given—now how do you call this? What do you—

Student: A kick out of it.

LS: If he is not given such a kick, yes. Good. And this is of course not a pleasant spectacle. And there are other things of this kind. And you then feel (and what you said made a very big impression on me, you may very well be right) that he states it in such a crude form in order to make clear his disgust at such a situation. I think that it is profoundly ironic, and the way in which you stated it, especially these things about the empty tomb and so on, are truly very persuasive . . . . And we should perhaps go into them later on, because if Vico is capable of this kind of thing, this might considerably affect the *New Science* itself. That surely was very, very interesting.

Now[7] we should consider these passages.[8] You said so relatively little about the content of this part of our work. Now in the *Autobiography* he gives an account of his work up to 1731, yes? And of course the *New Science*, in the version which we are going to read is [from] 1744, still later. Now what do we learn about our reading of the higher version of the *New Science* from the *Autobiography*? Shall I explain that question? Good. Vico has written a variety of books, and he

speaks of all of them up to a certain point. And then he wrote a first version of the *New Science* and then other versions of that; and there is a final version which was to be finished shortly before his death and came out only shortly after his death, and it is this final version which we are going to study.

Now what I have seen of the literature, and that is not much, but if I have a certain hunch that I will say that I can generalize from the very limited things that I have seen.[9] What people do is this: whenever they find a difficulty in the final version, they turn to the earlier version or the earlier writings, i.e. they interpret the final version in the light of earlier writings. Is this a legitimate procedure on the basis of his *Autobiography*? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: He almost asks you to do this in certain cases when he tells you that many of the things that appear in the second *New Science* were sketched in the first one, and that there are certain parts of the first edition that he is very, very proud of.

LS: What do you say to . . . .

Mr. Reinken: . . . on the other side of not greater weight, the fact that the second *New Science* is composed of additions and meliorations.

Different student: Also, his argument against the publisher who wanted to publish his collected works, that he felt that he didn't care to be remembered by his earlier works. And—

LS: What struck me in particular was a remark he made in an earlier book, but when he was no longer very young, the *Universal Law*, which was written—when? In the early—1714,[ii] which is constantly used by Croce and other interpreters, and he said, if I remember, [that] there were three items he still recognized, three items of the *Universal Law* . . . . At any rate, I think that it becomes significant [that] this is the most mature and ripe fruit of his thought,[10] this final edition of the *New Science*.

Student: Also, the first edition—he stated, he says, in a negative way, and only in the final edition . . . .

LS: Yes.

Student: . . . .

LS: No, we cannot—

Mr. Reinken: The manuscript was lost—

LS: No, no. Yes, but he rejected it as insufficient. That is, in fact, not an edition . . . scholars greatly. But even if it existed it wouldn't have been authoritative.

[ii] Vico began working on the *Diritto Universale* after delivering the inaugural oration at the University of Naples in 1719. The four parts of the *Diritto Universale* were published between 1720 and 1722. See *Autobiography*, 9-10.

Student: He said that he did not conceive the new principle himself until . . . .

LS: Yes, well I believe the evidence—I forgot the method . . . . But the overall impression I got is that we are acting wisely in studying the second *New Science* in its own light. Now what one would have to do, needless to say, if we had time or if we were to write a special study on Vico, which would take five or ten years[11]—then we would have to read, of course, the whole work of Vico to get a sense of his development. But we must study then each of these versions by itself and not get a kind of artificial mixture of the various writings or versions, which mixture has no authority whatever. Because it is our work. Because—well, let me try to make this very clear. [LS wites on the blackboard] Let's say that this is *New Science*; and this, let's say, is *Universal Law* . . . Some of these things, let us say these two things were already in the *Universal Law*. But here in this context, and there in that context, and perhaps this identical doctrine has a very different meaning in the *Universal Law* (you know, written earlier) than it has in this new version. So the ideal task would be to interpret Vico's thought in each stage by itself and then see, wait for the result. Since we are not Vichian scholars and we cannot do more than devote a poor eight weeks to the study of this 600-page book, we will strictly limit ourselves to this, to the second version, and see whether it doesn't makes sense in itself.

There is a commentary on this second version by an Italian Vico scholar, Nicolini.[iii] Two volumes; unfortunately I have taken it out [of the library], and that is one of the few privileges which teachers have. But the usefulness of the commentary in my opinion is limited, as far as I can see, to the fact that he gives you all the references to quoted authors. So when[12] [Vico] says, "A golden passage in Diodorus Siculus," he can tell you 4.19;[iv] and this is of course great relief for the man[13] who can't read the whole Diodorus Siculus in order to find this passage. That is the . . . otherwise, it is of no great help, so you should not be too envious of me that I have this out. Good.

Now let us then turn to our text. Yes, Mr. Butterworth—but there was someone else; Mr. Hartman also wanted to say something.

Mr. Hartman: Well, I just wanted to say—

LS: But first Mr. Butterworth. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: It seemed that you raised the larger question, and I wonder if you really disposed of it. What do you do in the face of an author who seems to be sending you someplace else when he approves . . . earlier works, as we will see that Vico does in the *New Science*?

LS: Well, in this case, of course, then—for example, this thing which he regards as so terribly important, the proof that the Law of the Twelve Tables was not brought from Athens, as legend has it, but was really genuinely Roman. All right, if he doesn't give that proof in the *New Science*

[iii] Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova*, ed. Fausto Nicolini, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1928).

[iv] Probably Book 4, chap. 19.

(I do not know whether he does) and he says he has given the proof in an earlier work, naturally you will read that, that goes without saying.

But let me take a very different case: Hobbes. Now in the case of Hobbes, we have three versions of the same teaching: the *Elements of Law*, the *De Cive*, and the *Leviathan*. And Hobbes does not tell us anything about the authority of each of these. By the way, in the case of *Leviathan* we have in addition the original English version and the Latin version made by Hobbes himself which differs in some interesting points from the original. Here we have no statement of the author: This is my final version; this is the better. Not at all. And if one studies the works in crucial points, the *De Cive* is by far better and clearer than the *Leviathan*—although *Leviathan*, of course, is most enjoyable to read because it is wonderful English, and Hobbes' Latin, while good, is not as good as his English. But on the other hand,[14] the *Elements of Law*[15] has perhaps least authority, because it was not published properly by Hobbes himself; it appeared only in a garbled edition in Hobbes' lifetime and was generally published only in 1928 or thereabouts. So it has so little authority, but there are some passages there which surpass in clarity and color anything you'll find in the *Leviathan* or the *De Cive*. But here, as I say, that is a different story because we have no authoritative declaration as we have[16] [from Vico]. It's an entirely different procedure. But there are some earlier writings of Hobbes—if we can call them earlier, twenty years earlier or thereabout than the first version, than the *Elements of Law*—that no one would attach . . . . for example—would regard this as evidence of the mature Hobbes[17], having the authority which the *Leviathan* has. Of course not. So I do not know at the moment any other case, because the case of Plato is very much more complicated, where we also have different versions and the question of the authority of the different writings arises, but I believe that case is entirely different. Mr. Johnson?

Mr. Johnson: I wanted to raise a question on a paragraph on page 142, and that was that . . . that he speaks of scholars, all scholars who study for advantage alone and therefore they succeed—

LS: Which part of the page?

Mr. Johnson: I'm sorry? . . . .

LS: Yes, "He who would reap from the study of letters." Yes.

Mr. Johnson: They were false scholars rather than . . . . And then he goes off on this story about [how] he finished this half of this discourse when the president of [the] Sacred Council enters the room; and then he goes back and repeats the first half again, but this time it is shorter and it has a new turn to it. And I mean, it seemed to me that he went out of his way so strongly to . . . .

LS: Well, let us say, would you not believe, I doubt a full professor, but maybe a young instructor, giving a lecture somewhere on this campus, and then the president of this University would come in ten minutes later, would he not do the same?

Mr. Johnson: . . . .

LS: In other words, a . . . it wouldn't do. I mean, one could also say it is a simple act of politeness. What would you say more?

Mr. Johnson: Why did he say "a new and briefer turn"—

LS: Well because he couldn't possibly—he had also to consider the rest of the audience. He couldn't simply literally repeat himself; that would have been an imposition on the others.

Mr. Johnson: . . . for the rest of the audience, but the . . . .

LS: That I do not know. Perhaps he said the same thing in different words, I mean—

Student: I was just wondering why does he—

LS: No, I mean, this is not a sufficiently solid basis. Because—we will later on, if we find the time, discuss the passages adduced by Mr. Reinken. Mr. Flaumenhaft? I have forgotten you for so long.

Mr. Flaumenhaft: . . . .

LS: I see. Well, thank you. Good.[18] Let us first consider the other passages and then turn to the passages mentioned by Mr. Reinken.

I remind you of the chief result of our discussion of the first Part. What Vico says about his ancestry, these simple statements, which if one has a certain information not supplied by Vico but which is very easy to get, gives one a good picture, a provisional picture, of what he's aiming at. He . . . Plato, who taught men how to live, how one ought to live; Tacitus, who shows how men do live, and we replace Tacitus immediately by Machiavelli for defensible reasons—not that Tacitus is identical with Machiavelli, but this is the function of Tacitus here[19], to represent Machiavelli. And then [LS writes on the blackboard] the synthesis: Bacon. And this is simply historically correct, that Bacon tries to produce a new teaching of how societies ought to be—don't forget that Bacon wrote an imitation of Plato's utopia in his *New Atlantis*: *new* Atlantis. Plato had written the first Atlantis, the dialogues *Critias* and *Timaeus*. And so this is perfectly correct. But the difference between Bacon and Vico is tremendous because in Bacon, after all, is the *buccinator*, he calls it: the "trumpeter" of the new science, of the new natural science which should bring about a great technological development contributing to the rising standard of living and so on and so on—a phenomenon which we know now from the end, which Bacon predicted or demanded at the beginning.

In Vico there is not this kind of thing [that we find] in Bacon. His synthesis is of a different nature because his theme is, above all, law. And this is indicated by the fact that the force of authority is Hugo Grotius. And this is a very good formula straight from Vico's mouth which gives us the first information of what we can expect. This I only thought I should repeat.

Now there are a few points in last time's assignment—let us see whether they are [of] help to us.[20] Mr. Butterworth ?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Pardon me?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Oh, yes. Well, there is a statement on Grotius which we should read which we have not discussed last time, on page 154 bottom, to155.

Mr. Reinken: "While preparing to write this life Vico found himself obliged to read Hugo Grotius *On the Law of War and Peace*. And here he found a fourth author to add to the three he had—"

LS: Excuse me, is not the title *De jure pacis ac belli*, *On the Right of Peace and War*?[v] I'm almost sure. No, Vico[21] changed the order to put war first. [LS chuckles] Grotius was much too peace-loving to put war first. But I do not know—I'm almost sure. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "For Plato adorns rather than confirms his esoteric wisdom with the common wisdom of Homer."

LS: Common: vulgar—*vulgara*.

Mr. Reinken: "Tacitus intersperses his metaphysics, ethics, and politics with the facts, as they have come down to him from the times, scattered and confused and without system. Bacon sees that the sum of human and divine knowledge of his time needs supplementing and emending, but as far as laws are concerned he does not succeed with his canons in compassing the universe of cities and the course of all times, or the extent of all nations." (154-55)

LS: In other words, Bacon . . . not in any way anticipating what Vico wanted to do. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> Grotius, however, embraces in a system of universal law the whole of philosophy and philology, including both parts of the latter, the history on the one hand of facts and events, both fabulous and real, and on the other the history of the three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that is to say, the three learned languages of antiquity that have been handed down to us by the Christian religion. And Vico had occasion to penetrate much more deeply into this work of Grotius when he was asked to write some notes for a new edition of it. He set out to write them less in correction of Grotius than of Gronovius's notes on him, which had been added more to please free governments than to give justice its due. (155)

[v] The title is *De jure belli ac pacis.*

LS: In other words, Grotius was much more complacent perhaps with monarchy than his (by the way, very good) commentator Gronovius[vi] . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Vico had covered the first book and half of the second when he abandoned the task, reflecting that it was not fitting for a man of Catholic faith to adorn with notes the work of a heretical author." (155)

LS: Yes, this is one of the funny passages because after it[22] [he gives] high praise to two Protestant authors: Bacon and Grotius. This is on your list of funny things? [Laughter] It should be on it.

Student: . . . .

LS: No, really. I mean,[23] one has to be aware of the fact that a writer is capable of this kind of thing or not, because there may be difficulties which can be sought by recourse to such a nature of his writing. Yes, now let me see if there is anything more which is—here he quotes at the end of Part A, on page 165, a statement of a review of his book on universal law by a French scholar, Jean Le Clerc. This is perhaps only the last quarter on page 165.

Mr. Reinken:

> "There is a continuous mingling of philosophical, juridical and philological matters, for Signor Vico has devoted himself particularly to these three sciences and pondered them well, as all who read his works will agree. There is such a close relationship between these three sciences that one cannot boast of having penetrated and understood any one of them in all its ramifications without having also a very good knowledge of the others. We are not surprised therefore to read at the end of the volume the tributes that Italian scholars have bestowed on the work. From these we gather that the author is regarded as an expert in metaphysics, law and philology, and his work as original and full of important discoveries." (165)

LS: Now this is of course in itself a wholly external statement, that he combined these three sciences. The question would naturally be: How does he combine them, and what is the meaning of the combination? This we will find out when we turn to the *New Science*.

The beginning of the next part is also interesting because it brings up the question of the *Autobiography* as a whole as a history, as giving the causes of why Vico became the man he did become. Here we find something. On the same page.

Mr. Reinken: "That Vico was born for the glory of his native city and therefore of Italy (since, being born there and not in Morocco, he became a scholar)—"

LS: An undeveloped nation. Today he would not be permitted to write that. Yes.

[vi] Johann Friedrich Gronovius (1611-1671) edited *De jure belli et pacis* as well as numerous works in classical Latin.

Mr. Reinken: "is evidenced by nothing so much as by this: that after this blow of adverse fortune, which would have made another henceforth renounce all learning if not repent of having ever cultivated it, he did not even suspend his labors on other works." (165)

LS: We will stop here. Now what does this tell us about the cause of why he became what he did become? In the first place, it is quite a clear thing, by the reference that he was born for the glory of his native city and therefore Italy; he was born not only *for* that but also to some extent *by* that, as he makes clear by the reference to Morocco. Without Italy or Naples, no Vico. I mean this man with the same gifts born at the same time in Morocco would not have become an outstanding man. Of course this is not particularly—. A few centuries before, not in Morocco, but in the neighborhood of Morocco (in Tunisia or thereabouts), Ibn Khaldun was born, who is in the general literature compared to Vico.[vii] So of course he means Morocco at that time when it was rather low.

But what about this thought? I mean, this is a part of a causal explanation of Vico's development: Naples, early eighteenth century. And in every modern history you choose you will find this fact duly emphasized. What about the character of such explanation? Is this a novelty in Vico? The classic adage on this subject is in the most obvious place in political philosophy: at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*.[viii] No one can have missed that. It say[s]—you know it, Mr. . . . ?

Student: It's the story about a man who came from a very small island and . . . .

LS: Themistocles.

Student: And he said that if he had been born in Athens, he would have been famous or great. And he said, "It was my poor fortune to be born on this island. So—

LS: I think . . . reply. He said, "Surely—

Student: [24][Themistocles] said, "Surely if I were born on your island I would [not] have been famous. But if you had been born in Athens, you wouldn't have been famous either."

LS: Seriphian, he was from Seriphus, a Seriphian. Yes, that's the story. In other words, that was always known, that among the conditions making[25] full human development [possible], of course the country or city in which the man is born is of crucial importance. There is nothing new in it and it is in a way a cause, although it is of course not a sufficient cause, because otherwise all Neapolitans of Vico's generation would have to be first-rate minds, which even Vico does not say, in spite of his unusual modesty. Good. A modesty which is not always present as . . . .

Now then, what is the real proof of his greatness in the immediate sequel? [26]He ''made two sizeable volumes in quarto." Yes?

[vii] Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was born in Tunis. Like Vico, he wrote an autobiography and, more importantly, a work of sweeping history and historiography, the *Kitāb al-'Ibar* or "History of the World."

[viii] 329e-330a.

Mr. Reinken:

> In the first part he set out to find the principles of the natural law of the peoples within those of the humanity of the nations by way of [a critique of] the improbabilities, absurdities and impossibilities which his predecessors had rather imagined than thought out. As a sequel to this in the second part he set forth the generation of human customs by means of a certain rational chronology of the obscure and fabulous periods of [the history of] the Greeks, to whom we owe all we know of gentile antiquity. (165-66)

LS: Let us stop here. This is the earliest version of the *New Science*. Now what is the term? He always translates "natural law"; it is in Italian always of course *diritto*, which I would translate "natural right" of the peoples, to keep the terms clear.[ix] *Legge* would be law. Good. Yes, this is a very rough indication of his subject. Then he says something about a somewhat later version of the *New Science* in the next paragraph. Will you begin: "In this work he finally discovers."

Mr. Reinken: "In this work he finally discovers in its full extent that principle which in his previous works he had as yet understood only in a confused and indistinct way."

LS: Now this is one of the passages which makes it absolutely clear that the writings prior to 1725 have very little authority compared with . . . .

Mr. Reinken: "For he now recognizes an indispensable and even human necessity to seek the first origins of this science in the beginnings of sacred history. And because philosophers—" (166)

LS: "Even human": he means even disregarding all divine necessity, even all the . . . I believe it means in the context. In other words, as mere philosophers one is compelled to seek the first origins of this science in—but what does "first origins of this science" mean? That's of course a very loose expression, because the first origins of this science are to be found sometime in the life of Vico—the first principles, I believe, or the first origins with which this science is concerned. Yes, good. Yes?

Student: Well, the science will be a history.

LS: Yes, but let us see what kind of history.

Mr. Reinken:

> And because philosophers and philologians alike acknowledge their despair of tracing the steps of its progress in the first founders of gentile nations, he made ample, nay vast, use of one of the remarks Jean Le Clerc had made about his previous work. Vico, he said, "has given us a summary of the principal eras from

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[ix] Strauss's translations sometimes differ from those of the English text the class is using, and the reader adjusts his reading to follow Strauss's revised translation. We follow these revisions, not the translation by Bergin and Fisch. See session 2, note xv for a more complete statement regarding similar matters.

> the flood to the Second Punic War, discussing various things that took place in that space of time, making many philological observations about a great number of matters, and correcting a quantity of vulgar[x] errors which the ablest critics have passed over." (166-67)

LS: [27]Let us leave that here. Because what he needs [is] a critical art, that is [a] new critical art, art and not method. That is obviously clear because if the truth about the origins has to be found from the available material, be it books or coins or perhaps even diggings, then[28] of course you must possess a critical art which enables us to date the things properly and so on and so on. But he starts from the Flood. That is very important, because according to the biblical doctrine, all men with the exception of one family were destroyed in the Flood so that all men now living are descendants not only from Adam, but in particular from Noah, the survivor of the Flood. Good.

Now there comes a very long passage, in a way the most important passage, from here until page 173. Now I believe it was a book—do you have any particular passage which struck you here? Mr. Reinken or anyone else? Up to page 172, then we might read that too; otherwise we'll begin on page 172.

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: Yes. Where is that?

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: Where is this? Where in the book? 172, bottom? Bottom, or where?

Mr. Reinken: Middle. "On the fanciful hypothesis that the first kings were monarchs such as those of the present are, the commonwealths could not have begun. Nor could the nations have begun by fraud and force, as has been imagined hitherto." (171) . . . .

LS: Yes. Et cetera. That is the point. And if there were monarchs proper—you know, like the monarchs of the eighteenth century or so—they also they would be "pre." And that is a key point: there must be something pre-rational. Yes. Of course the status of fraud and force is somewhat different. Force is possible . . . for bestial beings. We will find that out when we turn to the second treatise—to the *New Science*.

Student: In this non-rationality of the origins, in a very . . . fashion.

LS: Yes, but it comes out a bit more clearly in the sequel on page 172. Now he gives here this division of which we will hear *ad nauseam* when we read the *New Science*[29]: the three ages, the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, and the age of human beings; and three corresponding languages (how does he call them?): hieroglyphic; populous and vulgar, common; non-metaphoric. We will leave that here. Now here he speaks of the laws, on page 172, line 4 from the top.

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[x] The reader follows Strauss's earlier suggestion and changes the translation from "common" to "vulgar."

Mr. Reinken: "The first law was divine, under the government of the true God among the Hebrews and of various false gods among the gentiles."

LS: Now what does he say of this sentence in the light of the biblical notions? "Of the true God among the Hebrews," that is of course accepted. But "the various false gods among the gentiles": Is this an orthodox expression? Why? It is, but why? But one could say—

Student: . . . .

LS: [30]There are passages in the Bible in which the gods of the pagans are regarded as non-existent . . . by the way, one of the best known difficulties of Vico's whole teaching. Of course we get more evidence when [we] come to the *New Science*. Now this is sufficient now for you Mr. . . . ? Good.

And what was your other point which we wanted to discuss now? I believe on p. 182; this is of interest with a view to his *Autobiography*. "He[xi] wrote a very gracious letter from Venice to Lorenzo Ciccarelli asking him to obtain the autobiography of Vico."

Mr. Reinken:

> The latter[xii], partly from modesty and partly because of his ill fortune, refused several times to write it, but the repeated and courteous pleading of Ciccarelli finally won his consent. And, as may be seen, he wrote it as a philosopher, meditating the causes, natural and moral, and the occasions of fortune; why even from childhood he had felt an inclination for certain studies and an aversion from others; what opportunities and obstacles had advanced or retarded his progress; and lastly the effect of his own exertions in right directions, which were destined later to bear fruit in those reflections on which he built his final work, the *New Science*, which was to demonstrate that his intellectual life was bound to have been such as it was and not otherwise. (182)

LS: Yes, that sounds very necessitarian doesn't it? And at any rate it is [surely] important for [our] understanding[31] of the other work. On page 184, quoting a letter addressed by Abbé Antonio Conti, a Venetian nobleman. Conti says—read only the last sentence: "I should advise you."

Mr. Reinken: "I should advise you to put at the beginning of the book a preface which would set forth the several principles of the various matters of which the book treats, and the harmonious system which results from them and which extends even to the future, which depends throughout on the laws of that eternal history of which the idea you have given is so sublime and so fruitful." (184)

LS: Vico extends even to the future—now it is of course not Vico who says it, but a correspondent of Vico; but Vico quotes him without protesting and saying it's a gross misunderstanding—i.e., let us assume there will be new nations in the year 3000; it would still be

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[xi] I.e., Count Gian Artico di Porcía. See session 9, n. xi.
[xii] I.e., Vico.

true because it is an *eternal* history: i.e. every society, if it is not prematurely destroyed, will go through this process. And of course it applies in particular to the most interesting case, to the European nations, which have already reached this stage[32] of monarchy. There are barely any aristocracies in Europe anymore, in Venice and some other places he points out. And then there will come disintegration; that is the version which is so well known in our age through Spengler, you know; what's better, decay. Yes?

Student: When he speaks of the monarchy of that age, it[33] also appears to bear the trappings of the age of divinity, doesn't it?

LS: Pardon? Yes, that is a very long question:[34] How far is this, the divinity accepted in the first age and carried over surely to some extent in that age—[35]in other words, do you have here any divine laws properly speaking? Or heroic laws? That's the question.[36] You know another correspondent, Giovan Artico di Porcía writes, on p. 185, line 2: "in which men of science declare they apprehend much more than is actually expressed," which he also quotes without[37] comment, so let us then[38] make no comment. And then another statement about—yes here, that's very interesting: there appeared a rather nasty review of his book in a German periodical in Latin, the *Eruditorum* of Leipzig in 1727, and Vico—well,[39] one can understand that these men had no idea of the novelty of—and didn't understand it. Therefore [they] didn't understand it. One sentence is very important on page 187 in the second half of the page: "It says." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "It says that the author treats of a system or rather 'fables' of natural law. It fails to distinguish between the natural law of the peoples, which the book discusses, and that of the philosophers, which our moral theologians—" (187)

LS: Ah! Not only these—[40] [Who] are the heretics? Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf. So in other words, I mean, he would have been ignorant in[41] [this] description if he had theological, Catholic training; he didn't know this was a teaching common to Grotius and the Catholic teaching especially. It implies that the latter is the subject of the *New Science*, where it is merely corollary. The natural right is just in there. The *New Science* is strictly [concerned with] the natural right of *early* men, what later was discussed in the nineteenth century by Henry Sumner Maine in his book on ancient law.[xiii] And the book by Henry Sumner Maine is really a nineteenth century version of what Vico had done 130 years before and in some respects of course much more easily understandable than what Vico does, but it also doesn't have the theoretical background which Vico has.

Incidentally, on p. 188 he speaks of his own treatment of the profound origins of the wit, wit in the older sense in which Hobbes uses it: *ingenium*. Yes, *ingenium*, and laughter.[42] Yes. Here on p. 191 there is this passage to which one of you referred: "Vico gave them to understand that of all the poor works of his exhausted genius he wished only the *New Science* to remain to the world." And that means of course the most mature version, which is later, much later than this statement of 1731 . . . in 1744. And a similar statement on page 193 about the relation of the *New Science* to the earlier work on universal law. He considered the *Universal Law* necessary only for two passages, i.e. all other teachings of the *Universal Law* lack the authority of the *New Science*. This is perfectly clear. Yes, that is very important on p.194; that we must read. First paragraph.

[xiii] Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law* (1861).

Mr. Reinken: "Vico is dissatisfied further with the *Universal Law* because he tried therein to descend from the mind of Plato and other enlightened philosophers into the dull and simple minds of the founders of the gentile peoples, whereas he should have taken the opposite course; whence he fell into error in certain matters."

LS: This [is] *crucial*, absolutely. It's wrong to begin with the final [form of law], with its completion. And one must not begin with Plato, i.e. with natural law in the traditional sense; it amounts here to the context . . . and then try to understand how this natural law could have been understood by these early savages. And on the [one] hand, one must start from scratch, from these savages themselves and their understanding. Yes. So in other words, [the] *Universal Law* is simply[43] a relic of a stage which Vico has overcome . . . . And then he speaks in the . . . that even the first *New Science* is insufficient, it is fundamentally insufficient. So it [is] clear that we have to take the second *New Science*, and especially the version which he finally made right before publication.

So this is all I wanted to bring up, but I simply have now to give Mr. Reinken the opportunity to tell us something about the statement at the beginning. Can you repeat it to us, the gist of it, what you call the irony, and without any attempt to slaughter Vico before we have properly . . . him . . . . You know this is the famous—*the* principle of criticism is this: you must not slaughter your . . . [laughter]. And that means you must give him the benefit of the doubt; that means that if you take some foolish remarks that he makes inadvertently and say this as a refutation is impossible. You have to take him at his strengths . . . .

Mr. Reinken: . . . might be relevant to Vico's understanding of the ironic position . . . . Well, take the second citation on page 175. Remember that he had to bring out the *New Science* at his own expense—

Strauss: He was a very poor man, yes.

Mr. Reinken: But . . . the *Funeral Rites of Carlo di Sangro and Giuseppe Capece* the contributions of both Vico and Father Laudati "were published in an illustrated volume, magnificently printed in folio at the expense of the royal treasury." (175) . . . .

LS: In other words . . . unless he assumes that he was so mistaken by a . . . by a really good man . . . these writings have not the slightest reason for—in any consideration to such . . . . And a man who speaks so highly of his work, of the *New Science*, as he in fact does—in other words . . . .

Mr. Reinken: Well,[44] I felt that at one point that the, perhaps typical of Vico's . . . style, is the description of the law case, where he defend[s] his son-in-law. I think he gives a true representation of his life . . . . Page 179, he goes on about the—it was the occasion of this . . . grateful for the funeral oration to the Spanish succession war but he defends his son-in-law with his masterly—in finding "thirty-seven presumptions of falsehood" against the "notary still living," and

> the judges in their great kindness not only maintained silence during the course of the pleading but did not even so much as glance at each other. Finally, the regent was so deeply moved that, tempering his feelings with the gravity befitting such a great magistrate, he made a gesture combining, in proper degree, compassion for the defendant and scorn for the plaintiff. Thereupon the Vicaria, which is somewhat strict in rendering judgment, acquitted the defendant without adjudging that the criminal falsity of the accusation had been proved. (179)

And this . . . .

LS: But still he is trying to make . . . . [xiv]

Mr. Reinken: This is the fact, but—

LS: No, I didn't say that. Once you have reason for . . . but I would not use in in this way . . . for reading Vico . . . .

Student: **. . .** but the style of this story and in particular of . . . is typical of what we get from Vico.

LS: In other words this is another expression of . . . .

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: . . . [laughter] I think in Italian, it—

Mr. Reinken: But those are particular styles of wit. . . . But the aim of part B on page 173 is of this same pathetic . . . . Vico has just shown the moral of it, and then he quotes Cardinal Corsini, to whom it was dedicated . . . .

LS: That is true. No, that is quite true. I must confess I didn't . . . . I was rather embarrassed by the . . . . I thought that . . . it's such a long period . . . people were degraded, but still, the sense of dignity . . . .

Mr. Reinken: If I may repeat my judgment . . . his ironic method. But in playing at it, he does—he *is* degraded by it.

LS: That is not necessarily the case.

Mr. Reinken: . . .

Student: I'm wondering if[45] we could explore the soundness of Mr. Reinken's critique of Vico's use of the word *natura*, perhaps that passage—if you could read that over.

LS: Which was the passage?

[xiv] Some two minutes of the tape is inaudible here.

Mr. Reinken: The identification of *natura* and *nascimento*?[xv]

Student: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Yes, I took the quote, the *natura* to *nascimento*—the translators refer to it as being a frequently occurring phrase, and I found myself in it—

LS: . . . inborn, and the distinction . . . why it is not implied that . . . . Applied to Aristotle, nature means both, *hulē*, and . . . . in the case of all artifacts . . . because in the case of *physis* material matters, the material which the carpenter presupposes must . . . . But here the only natural thing is the beginning, the birth. From the moment the thing . . . but if man develops his mind according to nature, this development is . . . the actualization isn't natural. Think of someone who has a gift for mathematics or . . . this shows in childhood; even in some illiterate society it shows in some way or other. The natural gift tends by itself . . . .

[Inaudible exchange between LS and Mr. Reinken]

Mr. Reinken: Yes . . . page 171.

LS: Which paragraph?

Mr. Reinken: Paragraph 3, last sentence: "And from the times and ways in which they were born he unfolds the eternal properties which show that the nature of each, that is the time and way of its origin, is such and not otherwise."

LS: Yes, that's clear enough. But that does not yet prove that . . . . But[46] I believe that the main contribution of Mr. Reinken at this point is very valuable and will come in handy for the rest of the reading . . . .

Mr. Reinken: Having the opportunity . . . .

LS: Yes, good . . . . I say this also as a warning [laughter].

LS: Now next time, Mr. Butterworth will read a paper and he . . . . It's the first time you [have] read Vico?

Mr. Butterworth: Yes—

LS: And you ideally . . . written in an entirely different way. The *Autobiography* is written in an entirely different way, and . . . given you . . . rather small. In a way you have to make a kind of breakthrough.

Mr. Butterworth: I hope I succeed [laughs].[47]

[xv] Nature and birth.

LS: Yes, well . . . . Are there any other problems you want to . . . . Mr. . . . ?

Student: Very briefly, at the bottom of page 167, where he speaks of a certain natural instinct that man has for divinity, and the sentence following that, "Fear of these gods"—

LS: Where is that?

Student: The bottom of p. 167.

LS: Yes I see it.[48]

Student: He must have something in mind.

LS: Surely, surely, but read the sentence carefully.[xvi] So in other words, part of the *New Science* is a natural theology. First, what is a natural theology? What is natural? Let us interpret it, because not everyone here can suppose to know the meaning of the term. This is the Political Science Department, not . . . . Now what is natural theology?

Mr. Reinken: . . . without revelation.

LS: Yes, Good . . . . the doctrine of God . . . . Good. So, and therefore one can believe in a natural theology of all nations because in itself it should be expressive of all nations. And now there comes . . . by which these people naturally created by[49] themselves [their] own gods. Which clearly means that Zeus is not just a . . . . But they are the creation[s] of these nations, Greeks and . . . through a certain natural instinct that man has put within him. Now what can this mean, this . . . . An instinct, an instinctive desire[50] that there should be gods. That there should be. And they are born, these gods are created . . . this is the maximum . . . . Is this clear now?

Student: Yes, well the following passage—

LS: Yes?

Student: There he says that the god was made . . . .

LS: Yes—

Mr. Reinken: Did you have anything specific in mind?

LS: Oh yes; read that . . . .

Mr. Reinken: It's rather comic that in the *New Science*, when a hundred years after the flood and the ground is dry enough for the thunder to start up again, and of course Vico had forgotten

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[xvi] The sentence reads: "That is to say, a natural theology of all nations by which each people naturally created by itself its own gods through a certain natural instinct that man has for divinity."

that . . . badly frightened, certain of the giants were copulating in the fields and so they went and hid themselves in caves, and this is the origin of matrimony.

Student: Vico links his origin of man and the—

LS: No, no, no—

Student: This is not a reference to—

LS: There may be an implicit reference but no explicit reference . . . . So . . . that the first founders of nations because these founded the nation.[51] These and similar experiences make the difference between the bestial, original men and the first civilized men, if you can call that civilization. And these latter became the patricians and the others remained the plebeians, and—

Student: Well, did they leave their caves after they hid themselves—

LS: No, no—from now on they were sure that public copulation is absolutely impossible. The roots of chastity are laid by superstition. That's all. I mean that it survived and it still—apart from certain beatniks and historic . . . . That is a different story because now we have rational arguments. But originally, rational arguments would not have made any impression because of the immense stupidity of these early men. But this here, which . . . .

Student: They felt not only that they were being rebuked for public indecency, but they were obliged to make lifelong companions of the women with whom they—

LS: No. How he developed that, that's quite true. But I think I suppose precisely because they were not rational they didn't make a distinction between prohibition against public indecency and prohibition against the dissolution of marriage. You know? And this is the . . . . The pre-logic of the mind of the savages . . . . But I remember I heard about this thing in school, probably in university, that there are tribes who do not know the simple relation between sexual intercourse and the generation of children—

Students: . . . .

LS: Yes, but . . . whether they really didn't know it, whether this was not a kind of mystical interpretation which was compatible with . . . . I heard of some people[52] [who] believe that when . . . used [a] rowboat, they didn't believe that there was any causal connection between . . . . But then someone else found out they knew that very well. And . . . function to make sure there would be no storms.

Student: They also like to make fun of anthropologists—

LS: Yes, I hope. [Laughter] These nosy people.

Student: The Dalai Lama was being interviewed—

LS: Who was being interviewed?

Student: The Dalai Lama was being interviewed by anthropologists; they could not make sense of his story and his life, which seemed very complex, when they realized that he was talking at the same time about his incarnations, which allowed him to be in the same place at different times.

LS: I see. So now,[53] how did we come to this, these anthropologists? . . . always fall back on this. I am unable to give an explanation of these events in terms of reason because they do not have reasons, contrary to what I believe now in . . . there must be some subrational points about it. Vico does this in some way justice . . . they might be so dumb that mere images and . . . just hit them, and they act on them and never put two and two together . . . to understand how could these become rational. You could again state it in simple terms of polemics. You speak . . . . You speak of a social contract. Show me early men who are able to understand what it means to make a contract and to keep it. You must have a terrific memory not to forget a contract. [Laughter] This comes, by the way, in the greatest work of this [kind][54] written in later times[55], Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* . . . and then Vico's but at the same time . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Is it not true, at least at the level of political intent, that Vico, even Hobbes . . . is concerned not only with the founding of society as it took place . . . concerned with the origins and found necessary to postulate rational men . . . . If faced with the choice . . . but then men were irrational, they were these brutes crawling out of the cave, then would not Hobbes say: Well, I don't care about them . . . .

LS: Yes, sure. But still. Perhaps it is nevertheless . . . because these men in the state of nature as he describes them could not have had any language; how could they have . . . . But the point is this, it has to do with that schema . . . [xvii]Bacon . . . an ought on the basis of the is, a lower ought. Bacon, Hobbes, and so on. Vico is apparently . . . . [56] Bacon and his other successors built up a new normative political doctrine because the teaching of the *Leviathan* is of course normative, as is the teaching of Locke in the *Civil Government*, and Rousseau in the *Social Contract*. Vico has no normative doctrine . . . . He has a purely theoretical account of the process with emphasis on the beginnings. That is true. Now the question arises of why. We cannot exclude the possibility that he, writing in Southern Italy at that time—foreign domination and all this kind of thing—it was not prudent [to write this] because his teaching of the well-ordered monarchy could conceivably have been in considerable contrast to the practice[s] of the Spanish viceroy in the North, because as far as I know he hasn't written about it. That could be, that's one reason. But there is another reason: that he thought that it was not very interesting in itself, because everyone can figure out for himself what a well-ordered monarchy is. And there are some good writers about this subject whom one can read . . . .

But it could of course also have been that he really was not interested in that normative part, and he was much more interested in that development from savage origins, via civilization, to the decline and decay, which of course cannot be of any practical importance; [it] can only be of theoretical importance. At least according to the vulgar views in the nineteenth century,[57] people thought that such a strictly theoretical, evolutionary scheme—progressive, or circular, or

[xvii] There is a glitch in the tape here.

whatever it may be—could be of practical importance, if you know the world of the future, you can adapt yourself to it. But[58] I believe there's not a trace of [59] [this] in Vico; it could be that, in other words,[60] he was simply interested in understanding the nature of human society[61]—and therefore also the limitations of human society—without having a particular interest in elaborating a best commonwealth. But as I say you must not forget the evidence which we have is extremely scanty, to make an understatement. When we have read the chief work of Vico, then I believe we can speak with some definiteness about that . . . come across a passage which is of more than theoretical significance, and that's his teaching . . . of his time—for example, a patrician republic . . . is a relic, an anachronism. That is perfectly true, but that doesn't mean the same in Vico as it would in Trotsky or Stalin. Yes? You have to do something about it: you ought to get rid of it. Mr. Erickson?

Mr. Erickson: . . . in that, by having a correct interpretation, certain normative positions that are based upon an incorrect interpretation . . . a number of possibilities would remain—

LS: That's a good point. There is one point which Vico always emphasizes, but which—again, I know too little to say how much it means. Shortly before Vico we have another representative of this modern school called Pierre Bayle, who had said that in principle a society is possible without religion;[62] [he] was the first man as far as I know who asserted that an atheistic society is possible.[xviii] Now Vico draws the conclusion from his [own] schema that since religion is the first cement of society, Bayle is absolutely wrong. This would be one important example of what you implied.

Mr. Erickson: But even if it were true that religion were necessary, my principle or my suggestion would still follow because then the principle or the chief justification for a particular religion would be its utility, which would mean that because of its utility, because it was useful, but not important for itself, then the believers could be nevertheless persecuted *sub rosa*—

LS: Well—

Student: . . . .

LS: [63]Religious persecution is one thing, and religion is another. Now I was speaking only of the question: Is an areligious or irreligious society possible? And as far as I have seen hitherto Vico always rejects Bayle's thesis, and this would lead to [a] practical conclusion—to that extent what you say is true. But[64] [it is one thing to make] important remarks from which practical conclusions flow and [another to] develop[65] a practical teaching as such. And the latter, as far as I see, Vico does not do, but again as far as I can see . . . . So next time we will get our first introduction into Vico proper by Mr. Butterworth.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "But then—and."
[2] Deleted "don't."

[xviii] Piere Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

[3] Deleted "—that."
[4] Deleted "when you say that Vico—the."
[5] Deleted "concern—his."
[6] Deleted "are."
[7] Deleted "I would like to before we turn—."
[8] Deleted "But before I—."
[9] Changed from: "Now what I have seen of the literature, and that is not much, but if I have a certain hunch I would say I can generalize from these very limited things."
[10] Deleted "this second—."
[11] Deleted "then."
[12] Deleted "he."
[13] Deleted "who has to—."
[14] Deleted "in."
[15] Deleted "which."
[16] Deleted "here."
[17] Deleted "which."
[18] Deleted "Now we have to consider—."
[19] Deleted "is."
[20] Changed from: "Now there were few points in last time's assignment that we see whether they are help to us."
[21] Deleted "—he."
[22] Deleted "came given."
[23] Deleted "one has to consider—."
[24] Deleted "He."
[25] Moved "possible" and deleted "for."
[26] Deleted "in the."
[27] Deleted "Let us state—."
[28] Deleted "you have."
[29] Deleted "and."
[30] Deleted "one could."
[31] Moved "surely" and deleted "of."

[33] Deleted "does."
[34] Deleted "whether, I mean."
[35] Deleted "to what extent—."
[36] Deleted "In the same—."
[37] Deleted "no."
[38] Deleted "not."
[39] Deleted "that."
[40] Deleted "what."
[41] Deleted "these."
[42] Deleted "(You refer to the—)."
[43] Deleted "an early—."
[44] Deleted "there was—."
[45] Deleted "the next subject."
[46] Deleted "—So I think—."
[47] **LS**: Huh? **Mr. Butterworth**: I hope that I do.
[48] **Student**: [inaudible words] **LS**: Pardon?
[49] Deleted "itself its."
[50] Deleted "that there might—."
[51] Deleted "They became then— I mean."
[52] Deleted "of."
[53] Deleted "what was—."
[54] Deleted "time."
[55] Deleted, "around these times."
[56] Deleted "Vico in other words—."
[57] Deleted "because."

[58] Deleted “this.”
[59] Deleted “it.”
[60] Deleted “that.”
[61] Deleted “without.”
[62] Deleted “that.”
[63] Deleted “We are concerned—.”
[64] Deleted “there is one thing making remarks—.”
[65] Deleted “in.”

Session 4: October 9, 1963

Leo Strauss: You made a . . . effort[i] to give us an idea of[l] [Vico's] explanation of the frontispiece. And I shall not go into many of the details because we have to bring them up anyway later. It will take up too much time.[2] Let me first state one principle with which you may agree. We have discussed the *Autobiography*. The *Autobiography* was completed about thirteen years before this work, and this is his final statement. Let us forget about the *Autobiography*,[3] or let us store it here and not build on it . . . drawing on it in case of necessity . . . . That's the one thing. And then there is another thing which I must mention, although we cannot possibly discuss it. I have no idea about it, but it is surely a very legitimate question. You know, what Mr. Butterworth[4] told us is Vico's explanation of this frontispiece. What is the relation of the explanation of the frontispiece? Is every item in the frontispiece explained in fact?

Mr. Butterworth: I would say yes.

LS: You think. I see. I would not be surprised, but still surely it has to be considered. Let us forget about that.

Mr. Butterworth: He claims that—

LS: Yes, but sometimes claim and achievement do not coincide. And as scholars we are obliged to be critical of everything. I will limit myself entirely to the beginning of your statement, to which you referred later on again. And that is the fact that he calls his new science "metaphysics." Now, first we must have a somewhat more precise notion of what metaphysics meant prior to Vico. Now, for example, you said it dealt with heavenly bodies traditionally.

Mr. Butterworth: Heavenly bodies is one part of the divine—

LS: But you cannot say the heavenly bodies are the one traditional metaphysics. The heavenly bodies as bodies.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, well—

LS: If the heavenly bodies, and therefore their meditation, lead to a mental principle in their movements, to that extent—

Mr. Butterworth: To this extent—

LS: To that extent, yes. Good. But what is the most simple definition of metaphysics? I mean not sophisticated, very simple. There was an earlier contemporary of Vico called Descartes, who wrote *Meditations on First Philosophy*. "First Philosophy" is a general name for metaphysics. On what is the subject of the meditation?

Student: . . . .

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[i] Strauss responds to Mr. Butterworth's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: And—

Student: . . . .

LS: And the mind, the human mind. So this was the subject: the human mind, at least in the higher regions; and there is something called "soul" in general which belongs to psychology which is somehow the transition between physics and metaphysics. But mind is mind, the idea or *mentis*. That is sufficiently good for the first. And that is exactly what Vico's metaphysics is about. On God and the mind,[5] yes,[6] [which] are traditional [subjects of] metaphysics. Good. Metaphysics is anyway that which transcends physics. And that is true of Vico as well. [LS writes on the blackboard] Here there's physics, [which is] low, the natural world, and here is . . . . He transcends it . . . . This is very important. So it is only because of the mind. Let us keep this in mind.[7] In addition, the proof of the existence of God [also traditionally] belonged[8] to metaphysics. Natural theology. He gives a new proof of the existence of God insofar as he gives a new proof of providence, divine providence.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, that is what he in fact claims to do. Or did you not find that claim here a mistake?

Student: . . . .

LS: Oh, and so we'll find, I believe. But let us withdraw that and simply speak for the time being. Vico's metaphysics has this in common with traditional metaphysics, that is, the doctrine of God and the mind. But that is about all, because he understands the mind very differently, as you have indicated. A history of human ideas did not belong to metaphysics in the traditional sense,[9] whereas it is a core of it in Vico. But we must proceed step by step. First let us turn to paragraph 2.

Hitherto the philosophers have contemplated God through the order of the natural things. This means, of course, above all Aristotle. Physics leads up to metaphysics. Vico's metaphysics contemplates in God the world of the human minds (plural), the world of the human minds, i.e.—his own expression—the metaphysical world, in order to demonstrate providence in the world of the human minds, i.e. the civil world or the world of nations.[10] Let us start at the beginning. The metaphysical world as he understands [it] is the civil world, but as providentially guided. But with the understanding that the providential guidance is to be demonstrated. That is the first point.

In the same paragraph he speaks of a theme which is familiar to all of you but not as a particularly metaphysical assertion: namely, man is by nature a social being—the old Aristotelian assertion contested by Hobbes openly, and implicitly by quite a few others. But how does Vico understand man's natural sociality? On the basis of the Christian teaching, he says: Yes, man is by nature social, but man's nature is corrupt. What becomes of his sociality as a consequence of corruption? He becomes antisocial[11] to a certain extent. He becomes antisocial. So while man in his nature, in his *natura integra*,[12] is social, as a corrupted man he is antisocial.

And we can even say he is asocial, although that is not quite exact but it will make the issue clear. What does it mean [that] men are antisocial or asocial? Each man strives now only for his private good. There is no longer any natural directedness towards the common good. But even in this corrupt state, and especially among the pagans, men are driven towards the common good, although they strive only for their private good. This is the proof of divine providence. Now he has to develop it. Men[13] [striving] are in fact acting towards the common good, but they are all absolutely selfish. They don't care much for the common good. Now, how is it possible that men achieve the common good and no one of them thinks of the common good? There must be some being which directs their actions so that they in fact contribute towards the common good. Have you ever heard of such a doctrine, of such a schema? Yes, Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: Well, it sounds like the invisible hand.

LS: Exactly. An invisible hand is the same as providence . . . . In other words, human life is unintelligible except if we make the assumption of an invisible hand, of providence. That's not the whole story, but that is crucial. But this is already the formal character of the whole . . . .

Mr. Lyons: Could we also interpret that providence causes the courses and recourses—

LS: Yes, that comes in later—

Mr. Lyons: It's the same providence?

LS: Yes, it's the same thing. But let us limit ourselves first to the simple schema that we understand here. So we have now the basic proof of what happens in human societies, and especially in pagan societies, where no effect of grace can be assumed or is to be assumed. We see the work of providence. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: The only thing I have to say is, that argument I saw, but I thought I countered it by saying that *whatever* happens, then you see the effect of divine providence, by that statement—

LS: No, it's the outcome. It's the outcome.[14] For example, you could not prove divine providence from the Newtonian laws unless you would say this: You have the beautiful order of the universe due to mere mechanical forces. How can mere mechanical forces produce a beautiful universe? If you put it this way, yes. But this was no longer the way in which the physics of the late seventeenth century argued.

Mr. Butterworth: This was . . . . But I meant the argument that you see men selfishly striving for their own good; somehow, out of this selfish striving, they come together for a common good. And at any point—

LS: They do not come together; it comes about.

Mr. Butterworth: It comes about—

LS: No one thinks of it.

Mr. Butterworth: But what happens when you drop into a historical period in time when there's strife. You would still say—

LS: If you drop what?

Mr. Butterworth: [15]If you cut off your segment in the middle of the Peloponnesian Wars, for example, Vico would say that God is making these people fight—

LS: No, no, no, no. One cannot arbitrarily . . . . and that there are all kinds of things which are easily observed . . . everyone . . . at all times. That's not the point. But if you take such a massive thing, such a fundamental thing, much larger and more conventional than any particular event like a war, human society as such, it *works*. And somehow it works and it comes together and yet no one—that is an absolute fact—no one is concerned with the common good as such. Each is concerned only with his own good, and yet the common good comes about.

Mr. Butterworth: But it is my understanding that he said that at any point . . . you can see—

LS: Yes, I do not know if he said that is necessarily so, but let us proceed[16] because you must first understand what is, I think, a very simple thought in spite of the terribly complex way in which it is stated. Now therefore, he speaks of a rational, civil theology of divine providence, and this expression[17] [is] I think more clear. Theology refers here, [but] not always, to the doctrine of the one true God. The one true God is proven by the very working of the pagan societies. Simply corrupt men, without any effect of grace . . . and a commonwealth is produced. And what Mr. Lyons said about Adam Smith is of course true, but this is older—although the term "invisible hand" is, as far as I know, from Adam Smith. There was a man called Mandeville[ii] who lived in Vico's time. Does he have a first name? I don't remember. But these things were already there, "quote in the air." Good. Now let us then keep this in mind, and this simple connection between metaphysics as the study of the world of the human mind, identical with the study of the civil world, supplies a proof of divine providence and therefore the proof of the existence of God—because of the radical selfishness due to the fall of the individuals, leading nevertheless to the common good. So this we will keep in mind.

Now then, an entirely new thought: the first subject of this new science is Hercules. Hercules now understood of course as a type: the type of the political hero, the founder. But he makes it clear immediately afterwards that Hercules is preceded by the golden age, the age of the gods. And this is truly the first age of each nation. Now this is, of course, to begin with merely a restatement of some old Egyptian assertion, as we learn from Vico, according to which there is first the age of the gods, then the age of the heroes, then the age of man. Gods here mean, of course, the false gods. And he also sometimes calls this[18] theology, but there the theology is of course not the civil theology of which he had spoken in paragraph 2. And this age, this beginning, [this] earliest age of mankind, the earliest moment is the flood. This is made quite clear. And one has to consider Vico's chronology—[19]Vico's chronology appears in paragraph 9

[ii] Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), whose most remembered work is *The Fable of the Bees* (1714).

and paragraph 43—because there are certain chronological problems which arise in connection with that.

Now[20] paragraph 4: the first men believed that the gods lived on earthl that is to say, gods placed on Olympus—Mount Olympus—or on heavens. That is already a very late development, and it is called the age of the gods because the gods are shown to live with men on earth. Now how this is connected with the broader theme I shall not say. Let us see how Vico will explain this in the next part.

Hitherto philosophy was concerned with *private* morality, yes? Private morality. Now in his work it will be concerned with *public* morality, i.e. with civil, political customs. That is in paragraph 5. Mr. Rotella, you have the Italian original?

Mr. Rotella: Yes.

LS: So then whenever I commit a mistake, you will tell us right away, yes?

Of course it is clear that if the world of the human minds is identical with the civil world, the world of nations, then public morality will be much more important that private morality. This we can govern.

Paragraph 6. Metaphysics deals with human ideas. Now metaphysics, we have seen, can be said to be of course the doctrine of God and mind, at least the higher parts, the truly human parts, of the human mind. Now after Descartes, the mind is somehow replaced, although it is still there, by the ideas. What is mind? The mind [is] that which processes ideas. What this change means we don't have to discuss. But after Descartes, Locke took this over, and contrary to what we read now in most history books, Locke regarded himself as indebted to Descartes. He made this quite clear.[21] The way of ideas of Locke was his own doctrine and he traces that to Descartes.[22] People say that there is a gulf between continental rationalism (Descartes, Leibniz) and English empiricism (Locke, Burke and Hume), [and] there is something to that. But there is also something very important in common, in that they both have to do in a new way with ideas. Whether these ideas are innate, as Descartes asserted, or acquired, as Locke asserted, is a very important question *on this basis*. But the basis is the same: ideas. They are no longer the faculties; this was the old word for the soul. They are no longer so important. The ideas. That has infinite consequence[s]; infinite, infinite presuppositions. We cannot go into that now.

Let me add only one more point. If my memory doesn't deceive me entirely, Locke calls his own work, *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, a history.[iii] Or am I mistaken? Someone should check[23] [this]; it would occur near the beginning. And in fact he gives a history of the ideas. But the history which Locke gives is that from the newborn babe, as it were, the newborn babe, and that impression . . . and how out of this memory, the residues, and family conflicts . . . have a kind of history of the individual mind. Vico will not give a history of human ideas of the individual, but the history of human ideas of the human race, i.e. the human race is understood as a kind of being which has a childhood, and[24] [this childhood] will come back later

[iii] The following statement occurs in II.11.15 of Locke's *Essay*: "And thus I have given a short, and, I think, true History of the First Beginnings of Human Knowledge."

on. His first question is to understand the childhood of the human race in order then to trace the development of the idea from the childhood to the fully developed. How Vico's history of the human ideas is related to the Lockean history of human ideas is a difficult question.[25] After all, these early men, the early baby, grew up, and there must be something in common between the growing up of the early baby and the baby now. This part is not of great interest to Vico. I have not found any reference to it. Yes?

Student: You know, in paragraph 4 there's an explicit reference, a comparison of the first man with children as they are now. He says that—

LS: Can you read that?

Student: "These first men, children as it were of the growing human race, believed that the sky was no higher than the summits of the mountains, as even now children believe it to be little higher than the roofs of their houses." (*New Science*, 4)[iv]

LS: Yes, that is true. You know, at the end of the nineteenth century someone—[26]a German pupil of Darwin[v]—stated a law which he called the fundamental law of biogenetics, applying equally to the genesis of the individual and of the race. There is something of this kind [in the *New Science*]. In other words, the development of the individual and the development of the race have a parallelism and throw light at . . . . You know they tried to prove that[27] the human embryo goes through all the stages through which the human race has gone: the stage of fish and I don't know what. But today people are much more orthodox. Surely this is what he—

To repeat, the history of the ideas in the individual, from sheer sense perception up to abstract concepts, that is of no concern to Vico. He is concerned with the character of the grown-up men, [with] ideas in the very early period as they are related to the ideas of the grown-up men in a period of civilization.

So[28] [Vico's] metaphysics deals first with[29] human ideas, but historically with the history of human ideas. And he deals[30] first, [therefore], with the first form of human ideas, which are crude and brute thoughts about the gods. This is at the beginning and this is in a way decisive for the whole work, because[31] Vico's few errors about the beginnings have[32] infinite consequences regarding the later development.

Now the next point in paragraph 7, then, is [that] metaphysics is, in itself, a purely philosophic science. But it is a history. It must therefore have [something] to do[33] with the actual development, with what can be known only historically or, as Vico calls it, philologically. What he means by philology is coextensive with what we call history. Now what he wants to bring about is a kind of synthesis of philosophy and history. And he calls this synthesis [that] he'll

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[iv] The edition assigned for the seminar is *The New Science of Giambattista Vico,* trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1948). Hereafter the paragraph number will be provided at the end of the quote.

[v] Strauss apparently refers to Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), whose disputed law is often summarized as holding that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny."

bring about a natural theogony, i.e. a natural account of the genesis of the use of gods,[34] especially in early mankind. The natural genesis of the gods in the human minds.

Now let us now consider for one moment the history of philology. This is a[35] doctrine of all things which depend on human arbitrary will. What does he mean by that? Let us study laws. Now laws are made by men through human fiat. Language is made by human fiat. That we call this "table," and [in] Greek[36] [it is] *trapeza*, is due to a different fiat of the different societies. Fiat means, however, the same as authority. Some authority, the authority of the people,[37] is at the root[38] [of] these things with which the[39] history [of philology] is concerned. And therefore philology deals with things established by authority, whereas philosophy deals with things which are by nature, [and that are] not established by authority.

Nevertheless, although these things—these gods, for example—depend in a way on human arbitrariness and human authority, the process is a natural one. This is the first characteristic thesis of Vico. When, say, Plato or Aristotle spoke about these things—popular notions of gods, for example—they ultimately traced them also to some fiat, and the term for that was some agreement, tacit agreement, some free thing, as it were,[40] [concerning] a certain view which had developed in the community up to a certain point. And the Greek word for that was *nomos*, which[41] means not merely law but everything of this nature.

What Vico does, we can say, up to this point is[42] [to] understand as natural what was hitherto understood to be dependent on *nomos*, to be merely *posited* by human[s][43]. In other words that there is such a thing as Zeus, and Jupiter with the Romans, and the equivalent with the Germans and so on. And this is not an act of positing, a Greek positing or Roman positing or Teutonic positing. But since this is everywhere the same, nature is effective in it. What hitherto was understood to be due to *nomo*s must also be understood as due to nature. This is another step. We just follow his argument and we will, I trust, get some greater clarity while we go. I only wish I knew where I put my [LS shuffles papers]—wait a second until I have found my other sheet because otherwise I will be very distracted. Yes, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: I have myself used the . . . that the word arbitrary does not imply capricious—

LS: Yes, but in itself—let me put it this way. Vico abolishes that, but it [was] implied[44] in the first case.[45] I mean, there could have been . . . . But what Vico says now in contradicting the tradition [is that] there is no act. It is natural. In other words, the traditional view was, and the practical view . . . . Vico's first thesis can be said [to be]: the convention too is natural. Therefore it . . . . He didn't say it this way, but it amounts to this: there is nothing which is not natural. Surely the convention is natural. That is not sufficient for understanding Vico, but this is an important step in his argument because we will later on see that he maintains the distinction between natural and conventional. But Vico's—[46] I don't want to keep you waiting for this point. What he does in fact say [is that] when, say, a Greek philosopher was confronted with a variety of tribal customs, he would say: This is due ultimately to convention. By the way, this thesis has reappeared in our enlightened century in[47] Ruth Benedict's[48] book, *Patterns of Culture*.[vi] And she speaks of two North American tribes under the same dramatic conditions: same race, everything else, so nature is the same. And they have entirely different customs: the one are

[vi] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934).

tough, war-like fellows, [and] the others are very gentle. It is impossible to explain the difference in terms of climate or colony or what have you. And what she in fact says is this: that this tribe A adopted value system A and tribe B adopted value system B. And it is impossible to explain their choices. Any tribe has to adopt a value system; which it adopts is really tossing the coin.[49] Climate [may influence][50] other matters, but[51] [this] is fundamentally[52] a choice which can no longer be reduced to anything else.

Now what Vico says is this: In order to make such a choice, in order to toss a coin, he will have to be already a rational being. [A] monkey can't do that. Now, but early men after the fall, early pagans, were something like higher monkeys. They were brutish fellows and they were absolutely unable to make any convention; what they did cannot have had any convention. Conventions can come in only after man has developed his reason properly. Therefore in civilized society the distinction between the natural and the conventional is maintained by Vico. But it is . . . so I hope this difficulty is now disposed of.

Now in paragraph 8 (yes, this brief paragraph) men became civilized and human through religion. But what does Vico mean by religion? If you read the context it is not distinguished from superstition. He is speaking always of Hegel's religion. This is part of his demonstration. Superstition and some very terrible human sacrifice and what have you, are necessary. They are necessary [so] that man [can] develop out of the stage of bestiality in which he was after the Flood, after the Fall.

He always makes the distinction, for example in paragraph 9, between the natural right of the Hebrews and natural right of the gentiles. And his theme is the natural right of the gentiles. The Hebrews were the only nation which did not lose its humanity through the Fall.[53] All [the other] human beings lost it and decayed into a bestial state.

Let us read paragraph 14.

Mr. Reinken:

> From the forests where the urn is placed a plough stands forth, signifying that the fathers of the first peoples were the first strong men of history. Hence the founders of the first gentile nations above mentioned were the Herculeses (of whom Varro counted a good forty and the Egyptians claimed theirs to be the most ancient), for these Herculeses subdued the first lands of the world and brought them under cultivation. Thus the first fathers of the gentile nations—who were [1] just in virtue of the supposed piety of observing—

LS: Of the "*supposed* piety." Of their false religion. Then:

Mr. Reinken: "of observing the auspices which they believed divine commands of Jove (from whose Latin name *Ious* came—"

LS: . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "so that justice among all people is naturally taught along with piety." (14)[vii]

LS: Yes, "naturally" means that there is no reasoning involved. How this happens we will explain later.

Mr. Reinken:

> [2] prudent in sacrificing to obtain or clearly to understand the auspices, and thus to take good counsel of what, by the commands of Jove, they should undertake in life; and [3] temperate in the institution of matrimony—were also, as is here indicated, [4] strong men. Hence new principles are given to moral philosophy, in order that the recondite[viii] wisdom of the philosophers may conspire with the vulgar wisdom of lawmakers. By these principles all the virtues have their roots in piety and religion, by which alone the virtues are made effective in action, and by reason of which men proposed to themselves as good whatever God wills. (14)

LS: Now do you . . . savages knew nothing of God. They knew only of their false gods. That you must always keep in mind. Vico denies that the early religion is a relic of original monarchists. He denies that. So . . . this notion which emerged among mankind which has become completely bestial.[54] Let us read. Finish this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> New principles are given also to economic doctrine, by which sons, so long as they are in the power of their fathers, must be considered to be in the family state, and consequently are in no other way to be formed and confirmed in all their studies than in piety and religion. Since they are not yet capable of understanding commonwealth and laws, they are to reverence and fear their fathers as living images of God, so as to be naturally disposed to follow the religion of their fathers and to defend their fatherland, which preserves their families for them, and so to obey the laws ordained for the preservation of their religion and fatherland. (For divine providence ordained human things with this eternal counsel: that families should first be founded by means of religions, and that upon the families commonwealths should then arise by means of laws.) (14)

LS: Yes. Now which are these religions he is speaking of here? These are the most crude forms of postdiluvian pagan religions. A bestial kind of men as he will explain later. But this which was traditionally regarded as a kind of punishment for a sin or consequence of sin is regarded by Vico from the point of view that it was, as it were, a divine blessing. These people were just crudely superstitious, full of *fear*, haunted by terrible images.[55] But this was the beginning of their civilization. Just as in the case of the private self-interests leading without anyone's being aware to the common good, these crude, bestial beginnings led without anyone having an inkling

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[vii] The recording does not capture the full continuation of the sentence, which reads: "from whose Latin name *Ious* came the old word *ious* for law, later contracted *ius*; so that justice among all peoples is naturally taught along with piety."

[viii] The text reads "esoteric," but as previously noted, Strauss considers "recondite" to be a better translation of "*riposta*." Strauss and Mr. Reinken henceforth say "recondite" where the translation has "esoteric."

of it to, say, the highest peaks of Greece, Rome, Egypt and so on. This is strictly parallel . . . .[56] The people who made, as it were . . . had no inkling of what it was good for. What they thought it was good for, it wasn't good for at all, because their superstitious rites didn't help them against lightning or whatever it may be, [which is] what they thought. But in a long way, a roundabout way of centuries, it made them gradually humane beings,[57] people being capable of humanity.

Student: Doesn't a difficulty arise though because of the fact that you're stopping this process and saying: At this point we can now see that it was good. But it's an eternal process, and it's going to continue on. So there is no point at which you can say: This is good.

LS: What do you mean by that?

Student: It's an ideal eternal history, is it not?

LS: Yes, I understood that. What we see is this [LS writes on the blackboard]: two cycles, yes? From beginning to decay.

Student: With the possibility that the arrows continue on each side, right? That there should be a continuing arrow at this side and a continuing arrow there—

LS: A new one.

Student: That the line may continue around.

LS: What do you mean?

Student: Yes, with that possibility.

LS: Yes, well, but does he ever mention that? I found only . . . it can go on indefinitely. The ideal eternal history is a general schema. The beginnings must have been very critical. And the peak must be somewhere here and then there must be decay. That's all . . . . But this is the actual history in each particular case. This is I think what he means by the "ideal eternal." In other words, the law, the law which we find in all of these developments, that is the ideal history. Or how do—

Student: The law meaning divine law.

LS: Yes. I mean, well, sure.

Student: That's what I assumed meant "ideal"; but "eternal," I thought, meant there was no way—

LS: Because this law doesn't undergo change.

Student: Right, but the fact that there was an "eternal [law]" I thought meant that you couldn't stop it. That at any point—

LS: It may have this indication, but in itself it refers only to the character of the law, and not [to that of] of the actual life of human beings on earth. But we have not yet sufficient evidence to settle this.

Yes. Now let us read paragraph 16.

Mr. Reinken: "The plough shows only the point of the share and hides the moldboard. Before the use of iron was known, the share had to be made of a curved piece of very hard wood, capable of breaking and turning the earth. The Latins call the moldboard *urbs*, whence the ancient *urbum*, 'curved.'"

LS: I think we will simply dismiss this etymology. Some of them are sensible, but most of them are very fanciful.

Mr. Reinken: Should I just jump over—

LS: To "the moldboard."

Mr. Reinken:

> The moldboard is hidden to signify that the first cities, which were all founded on cultivated fields, arose as a result of families being for a long time quite withdrawn and hidden among the sacred terrors of the religious forests. These [cultivated fields] are found among all the ancient gentile nations and, by an idea common to all, were called by the Latin peoples *luci*, meaning burnt lands within the enclosure of woods. (The woods themselves were condemned by Moses to be burned wherever the people of God extended their conquests.) This was by counsel of divine providence to the end that those who had already arrived at humanity should not again become confounded with the wanderers who still nefariously held property and women in common.[ix] (16)

LS: So you have here obviously two different acts of divine providence. One act of divine providence is a prohibition against idolatry, etc. addressed to Moses. That is one thing.[58] I think that is quite clear. And the full notion of these early men is that they lived in this abominable communion of things and women. But what about this institution, or this abominable institution itself? This is also a part of divine providence because it was through divine providence that this bestial state arose. Vico does not [ever] make[59] a distinction between what God has instituted and what he permitted as would be done in orthodox theology.

We can say it as follows: Moses' fight against idolatry is something different from the fight against original atheism because that is, of course, also . . . . In the bestial state they were simply godless. Compared with the state of bestial godlessness the most barbaric superstition constituted a progress.[60] To that extent, the most abominable superstition is a work of divine providence

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[ix] As noted in the Editorial Headnote, the reader sometimes makes minor changes to the Bergin and Fisch translation. Not all of his changes will be footnoted. In this case the class translation reads "remained in the nefarious promiscuity of things and women."

because the only way in which mankind could progress was through these stages, just as a child must go through all kinds of fantastic notions and desires in order to become a human being because his reason is not yet developed.

In paragraph 17 he makes somewhat clearer the status of early men. Let us read that.

Mr. Reinken:

> There may be seen at the left side of the altar a rudder, symbolizing the origin of the migration of peoples by means of navigation. And by its seeming to bow at the foot of the altar, it symbolizes the ancestors of those who later were the authors of these migrations. These [ancestors] were at first impious men, who recognized no divinity; they were nefarious, since relations among them were not distinguished by marriages, and sons often lay with mothers and fathers with daughters; and finally because, like wild beasts they had no mind for society in the midst of this infamous communism of possessions, they were all alone and hence weak and finally miserable and unhappy, because lacking all the goods which are necessary for preservation and security of life. Fleeing the several ills they suffered in the dissensions— (17)

LS: And so on. This[61] is the beginning as far as they are considered in the *New Science*: a bestial condition with reason as the fully undeveloped potentiality. So for practical purposes, pre-ration[ality] develops.[62] Good. And all the windings from there up to civilization are divinely ordained.[63] What is the first step out of the absolutely bestial condition? The beginning of paragraph 18.

Mr. Reinken: "To these altars then, the impious-nomadic-weak, fleeing for their lives from the stronger, came seeking refuge, and the pious-strong killed the violent among them—" (18)

LS: And so on.[64] That is a provisional statement. But the key point, which he only alluded to, is this: the first step came about because there was from the very beginning a difference between the stronger and the weaker. And the stronger laid the foundation. And after the stronger had laid a foundation, the weaker organized themselves or were organized around the stronger. That is the beginning of the development. Surely there is inequality in the state of nature, a theme which we will also find in paragraph 25, for example. Now let us consider a few more passages.

In paragraph 22 he speaks—but we cannot read[65] [everything]—in paragraph 22 he speaks of this natural order of ideas. What he wants to find out is this natural order is the sequence in which the social ideas developed. And this is identical with the description of the way of providence with man.

Paragraph 25. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "The first of these symbols is the fasces because the first civil empires arose on the union of the paternal powers of the fathers. Among the gentiles these fathers were sages in auspicial divinity, priests who sacrificed to take the auspices or make sure of their meaning, and

certainly monarchs who commanded what they believed to be the will of the gods as shown in the auspices, and consequently were subject to no one but God."

LS: These primitive king-father-priests commanded—I mean, [who were] in control of sacrifices and auspices—commanded them what they wished, or they commanded them what they believed the gods wished: to go war, to destroy, or to slaughter this kind of animal, whatever it may be. And how does he go on?

Mr. Reinken: "So the fasces are—"

LS: No, no! They were in consequence subject to no one else except to God. What does this subjection to God with a capital G mean here? That this subjection was not known to them, of course, for [in] their consciousness they were subject to the gods. This is not clear? I mean, you see this ambiguity goes through the whole thing. When he speaks of a natural theology, this natural theology as a teaching of Vico refers to the one true God. But the natural theology as it existed for these pagans is, of course, blind to God as God. And here natural theology means that notion of god which naturally had developed. That is very confusing, but once one has made it clear to oneself, one can understand it. Read on. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> So the fasces are a bundle of *litui* or rods of divination, which we find to be the first scepters of the world. These fathers, in the agrarian disturbances we have mentioned above, in order to resist the bands of *famuli* aroused against them, were naturally led to unite and enclose themselves in the first orders of reigning senates (or senates made up of so many kings of families) under certain heads-of-orders. These are found to have been the first kings of the heroic cities. Ancient history tells us, though too obscurely, that in the first world of the peoples kings were created by nature; our studies discover the manner. Now these reigning senates, to content the revolting bands of *famuli* and reduce them to obedience, granted them an agrarian law, which is found to have been the first civil law born in the world. (25)

LS: Let us stop here. Now what he means very briefly is this. These stronger individuals in the first stage, after having become in their way pious through fear of lighting, for example, or whatever it may be, and having established a kind of matrimony, the first rudiments of civilization—they gather around themselves the impious-weak, those who had not gone through this first stage of civilization, and these were the clients of these first patricians. Now, but of course these impious fools who were the clients had[66] [stronger] bodies [than their rulers][67] if they band[ed] together[68], and the only thing [for the rulers] to do[69] [was] band together[70] and protect each other against these clients. This is the first community, [the] first society, which Vico believes he can confirm through the reports about early Romans. He contends that this has happened everywhere afterwards.

Now, but once this state has become settled to some extent, the clients under certain conditions are sufficiently strong to assert themselves, and then the patricians must make them certain, definite, clearly formulated concessions. The first civil law. Prior to that, everything was natural

right. Not natural right in the traditional sense, but it was a right which arose by a nature without any human reasoning or enactment.

Yes, now, what is the essence of civil law as he understands it here? Let us see; there is something in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From the same beginning—"

LS: No, no, we cannot read the whole—I wish I had made a note of that. But here in the middle of paragraph 26, he says, "And finally the origin of the republics, which arose in the world of the most severe aristocracy." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "The origins of the commonwealths, which had at their birth a most severe aristocratic form, in which the plebeians had no share in the civil law. In this connection the Roman commonwealth is found to have been an aristocratic kingdom which fell under the tyranny of Tarquinius Superbus, who sadly misgoverned the nobles and almost destroyed the senate. When Lucretia stabbed herself, Junius Brutus seized the occasion—" (26)

LS: No, I am sorry. We don't need that. Let us turn to paragraph 27.

Mr. Reinken: "The sword leaning on the fasces indicated that heroic law was a law of force but subject to religion, which alone can keep force and arms in their place where judiciary laws do not yet exist—" (27)

LS: So in other words, civil laws are judicial laws. That's the same thing here. The original right, the original or the heroic right, was a right of force. How would you translate *prevenuta*? *Ma prevenuta dalla religione*?[x]

Student: Our . . . religion, our secondary . . . religion.

LS: I see. Subsequent of—

Student: Subsequent to being—a religion is more important than a—

LS: Yes, good. But religion means here of course not true religion, that's crucial, but superstition. Superstition and force. And only later, in the later development there emerged civil laws, i.e. judicial laws. Yes? Go on. "Which right is the one."

Mr. Reinken: "This law is precisely that of Achilles, the hero sung by Homer to the Greeks as an example of heroic virtue, who made arms the arbiter of right." (27)

LS: Yes, well, which put the whole arbitrament in arms.[71] Read the next sentence.

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[x] The passage read by Mr. Reinken translates it as "subject to religion." It is not clear how the student (presumably Mr. Rotella) translates it, but *prevenuta* is the past participle of the verb meaning "to come before." A literal rendering would be "preceded by religion."

Mr. Reinken: "Here is revealed the origin of duels; which, as they were celebrated in the last barbarian times . . . [xi]in the first barbarian times—" (27)

LS: What does he mean by the last barbarian times?

Student: . . . Europe.

LS: The Middle Ages, yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> in the first barbarian times when the mighty were not yet so tamed as to avenge offenses and injuries by appeal to judiciary laws. The duels they practiced were appeals to certain divine judgments. They called on God as witness and made God judge of the offense, and accepted with such reverence the decision that was given by the fortune of the combat that even if the outraged party fell vanquished he was considered guilty. This was a lofty counsel of divine providence, to the end that, in fierce and barbarous times in which law was not understood—

LS: Literally, "reason," *ragione*.

Mr. Reinken: "it might be measured by God's favor or disfavor, so that such private wars might not sow the seeds of greater wars, which would have ended in the extinction of the human race. This natural barbarian sense can only be grounded in the innate concept which men have of that divine providence in which they must acquiesce when they see the good oppressed and the wicked prospering." (27)

LS: Yes, that is a very strange argument, isn't it? But what he says here[72] (to limit ourselves only to what is quite obvious here), is again that [there is] something irrational to it, that the assumption that the killed man is a guilty man—as he interprets guilt—is an important divinely ordained step towards law-abiding, law-controlled society. Human error, failings, are used by God for bringing about this state. But more[over], one would have to say[73] this: they must be used by God unless He wants to act miraculously all the time, because they are the material. The bestial human beings could not be brought out of that state in any other way. So natural right (this much I think we can gather[74] from what we have seen) is a right belonging to the time when reason was not yet understood. It arise[s] from a natural, barbaric sense, based on the innate concept of providence, that they must conform with providence when they see the misery of the good and the prosperity of the wicked. Now this can also be interpreted to mean, very simply, the rule of brute force and the acceptance of that rule. I go beyond what Vico says tentatively; let us see whether[75] we prove to be correct. Thus understood, natural right would be simply the right of the stronger, which is presented as rule of the pious, and believed in as the rule of the pious by the stronger. In other words, the stronger are not merely ruder fellows, like criminals now; they are in their own view pious: they sacrifice, they have their auspices, and they regard themselves as pious and they are in their own view pious. That is the crucial qualification, compared with a kind of Machiavellianism. In paragraph 30, beginning.

[xi] The reader is cut-off mid-sentence. The text here reads "so they are found to have been practiced."

Mr. Reinken: "The caduceus is the last of the hieroglyphs, to tell us that the first peoples, in their heroic times when the natural law of force reigned supreme—"

LS: And so on. Here you see it constitutes the natural right of force, it amounts to that.

Mr. Reinken: "looked upon—" (30)

LS: No, no,[76] there is something else I have to say. In paragraph 29 he develops the point [that] the *human* government, i.e. a government which is *known* to be government by human beings [both] by those exercising the government and [by those] subject to it, is either democratic or monarchical; and this is [a] late [development]. Prior to that the government is *believed* to be—both by those who exercise it, and by those subject to it—superhuman government, either by the sons of gods (heroes) or by the gods themselves. This is clear. And it is democratic or monarchic. What the relation of monarchy and democracy is according to Vico we cannot yet say. Here in this paragraph he makes a remark which was used very much by Mr. Butterworth: the natural laws are in fact natural customs. Yes, but what does he mean by that? I mean, because [to Mr. Butterworth] you found this so easily refuted, but he meant it—. What was your objection to what he says?

Mr. Butterworth: What I understood him to say about natural customs is that something that men share in common in different settings, at the same time but in different settings, having no communication with each other—

LS: Yes.

Mr. Butterworth: is ordained by a divine agent. And the question, the question that I had—or refutation, basically, is [that] I just don't see why that, that men could—

LS: Let's see. I mean if, say, the Chinese, and the Egyptians, and the Incas have certain things in common—and the Greeks and the Romans—they have certain things in their early stages in common, then it cannot have been due to having borrowed it;[77] it must have developed in each by itself. But if[78] something is the same everywhere, then it is natural. That's the argument.

Mr. Butterworth: I don't see, I don't see where . . . .

LS: Look, there are . . . on the old Incas propagated by virtue of the fact there are men and women, the same is true in China, same is true in Egypt, *ergo* it is not a human institution. It's natural. That is what he has in mind.

Mr. Butterworth: I disagree . . . because is that naturally right?

LS: If men, in a certain respect, behaved everywhere on earth in the same way, then it is surely natural, would you not say that?

Mr. Butterworth: It's natural, but it's not right.

LS: Yes, I see[79] your point [now]. Very well. But if there is no *possibility* for them to act differently, if they are *compelled* to act in different ways, then they are *blameless*—in that sense right.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, okay but—

LS: But what he—.[80] Very good. But they are blameless, even if they bring sacrifices to . . . at this point, because they could not possibly have known better. And that's what *determines* them: these images, haunting them, overpowering them; and they have not developed reason in any way so that they could take a distance from the images. What could these poor fellows do except sacrifice human beings to gods?

Mr. Butterworth: That I also understand, but nevertheless, you really have difficulty proving to me that they couldn't do anything else.

LS: If they . . . if they were in this respect like beasts—

Mr. Butterworth: How did the first men come upon reason? Something—

LS: Ya. No, this will be established in the way in which it can be established by Vico in the section on the Elements,[xii] which we will discuss a week from today . . . . But he will try to do this. But let me now do something absolutely unforgiveable and substitute for a question which[81] you raise[d] an unreasonable question, a[82] purely historical question: Is this story which he has here, from[83] very savage, bestial beginnings, in which not even speech was possible, as we will see later—is this Vico's invention?

Mr. Butterworth: No, it can't be Vico's invention because we see that Hobbes had the same idea.

LS: Hobbes does not—Hobbes presupposes in fact always language. It's a different thing. But to some extent—

Mr. Butterworth: Okay, Rousseau.

LS: Yes, or[84] Lucretius at least. Yes, sure. I mean that is—that is of some help only in this: if we read Lucretius, [we might be able to solve on that basis] some difficulties which we cannot easily solve on the basis of Vico[85].

Now the natural laws are in fact only natural customs, i.e. there is no difference between the *is* and the *ought*; they customarily do them. Yes? The right coincides with fact. I mention it in passing lest we be accused[86] [of] neglect[ing] his political philosophy.

[xii] Section 2 of Book 1, paragraphs 119-329.

In paragraph [2]9[87] he rejects mixed regimes, which are merely human contrivances, i.e. only figured out, not natural. The others grow naturally. And he refers here to a passage in Tacitus—*Annals*, Book 4, paragraph 33.

There[88] are some great difficulties in paragraph 30. Do we have some more time? Then I will state it only. What he seems to say in paragraph 30 is this: there were very few human beings at the beginning, yes? No, read it, I cannot state it properly without . . . .

Mr. Reinken:

> The caduceus is the last of the hieroglyphs to tell us that the first peoples, in their heroic times when the natural law of force reigned supreme, looked upon each other as perpetual enemies, and pillage and piracy were continual because, as war was eternal between them, there was no need of declaration. (Indeed, as in the first barbarian times the heroes considered it a title of honor to be called thieves, so in the returned barbarian times the powerful rejoiced to be called pirates.) But when human governments had been established, whether popular or monarchical, by the law of human peoples heralds were introduced to give warnings of wars, and periods of hostility began to be terminated by treaties of peace. (30)

LS: In other words, in the first stage there was perpetual war, the war of everybody against everybody. In the second stage there was a law of war, making a clear distinction between war and peace which lasted until the introduction of the Cold War [laughter]. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> And this, by a high counsel of divine providence, to the end that nations in their period of barbarism, when they were new in the world and needed to take root, should remain circumscribed within their boundaries and not, fierce and untamed as they were, cross them to exterminate each other in wars; but after they had grown up and at the same time become familiar with each other and hence tolerant of each other's customs, it should then be easy for conquering peoples to spare the lives of the conquered by the just laws of victory. (30)

LS: Yes, I mean this difficulty, the paucity of human beings at the beginnings, should have been the reason to *forbid* war in that early stage altogether, and not as it were [to] establish perpetual war. That is very strange.

Now in this next paragraph he speaks of the three ages in the customary way, the ages of the[89] gods, of the heroes, and of human beings. And then he says that in the third age, democracy came first—popular commonwealth—and then monarchies, in agreement with Roman history, and this will be kept throughout. In paragraph 32, about 10 lines from the beginning, he speaks of three languages corresponding to the three ages. The third was human language—

Mr. Reinken: "Using words agreed upon by the people, a language of which they are absolute lords"— (32)

LS: Yes, you see here convention—that is, what they agree upon, *nomos*—only in the third stage. Prior to the development of reason there cannot be any agreement, there can only be natural process. So[90] to repeat this point, which I state[d] before, Vico does not abolish the distinction between the natural and the conventional; he only asserts that convention presupposes a highly developed rationality which is not possible in the first two stages. In paragraph 34[91], shortly after the middle of the paragraph,[92] he calls these men—the early men—people of the most strong imaginations and men of the[93] weakest reasoning. Very strong imaginations, very weak reasoning—that was the beginning . . . . extremely inadequate and imperfect. This powerful imagination and weak reason—this is fundamentally the Lucretian view restored in modern times by people like Hobbes, but by quite a few others. Paragraph 38 contains a statement of very great importance.

Mr. Reinken: "The second was the heroic jurisprudence, all verbal scrupulosity (in which Ulysses was manifestly expert)." (38)

LS: In other words sticking to the . . . [LS writes on the blackboard]. That is what he means. He discusses this later. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This jurisprudence looked to what the Romans jurisconsults called civil equity and we and we call reason of state." (38)

LS: Yes, this is . . . . Civil equity is identical with *raison d'etat*. In other words, in the first stages you had [the] natural right of the gentiles, which is a very primitive thing. A very primitive thing. And then when reason has developed, then alone can there be civil equity in contradistinction to that primitive natural equity of the early age. But what is this civil equity? Reason of state. [It] sounds very shocking, and it has a very shocking implication, which is the assertion that the early stage was the rule[94] of sheer force. Sheer force.[95] But of course [if] I try [to] use another term, it will apparently lose its shocking character. Here we have the stage in which *man* makes the laws, human beings make—reasoning. With a view to what?

Student: The common good.

LS: Yes, well you can use a word which [likely] sounds[96] less noble: utility. Here you are, that's reason of state. Reason of state does not mean that in each case you will choose the most Machiavellian or devilish device, of course not! That is a very silly . . . . But[97] the good of the society is the standard of legislation and this is indeed not—nothing is said here about the presence of a natural law[98] guiding reason of state. Okay. Civil equity is here identified with reason of state. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: Could you repeat that . . . .

LS: Reason of state, civil equity, in contradistinction to natural law. The equity used by lawyers as well as legislators.[99]

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, not only . . . . It's not very different from that. And one could say the emphasis on the greater good of the majority does not belong necessarily to the reason of state. If the legislator or the king thinks, say, that the most important part of the community is the nobility which fights the wars, then[100] reason of state demands that they be considered more than the villains. In other words, the utilitarian and Marxist . . . put the emphasis on the majority; that is not an . . . reason of state. Reason of would be that the majority also has to be considered, but which of the two has to be considered more: the nobles or the majority,[101] the rich or the poor? That depends. Reason of state would say that it depends on the circumstances. In some situations, if the rich misuse their power and become a danger to the commonweal, then they must be stopped; but there may be other situations in which the majority must be stopped.[102] Reason of state [in itself] is neither democratic nor anti-democratic;[103] [it depends] on the circumstances. There is another remark in this chapter a bit later:

Mr. Reinken: "And his by counsel of divine providence to the end that the gentiles, not yet being capable of universals, which good laws must be, might be led by this very particularity of their words to observe the laws universally. And if—"

LS: In other words, this stupidity of early law . . . that was necessary since they could not yet possibly interpret the law equitably in the light of general principles. The maximum you could do was to make them stick to the letter of the law; that was the most civilized . . . possible. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "And if, as a consequence of this equity, the laws turned out, in a given case, to be not only harsh but actually cruel, they naturally bore it because they thought their law was naturally such. Furthermore—"

LS: In other words, they regarded right as by nature harsh and cruel. It is a proof of justice, as it were—a sign of justice is its cruelty and harshness, and therefore [they had] no objection. No objection. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Furthermore, they were led to observe their laws by a selfish private interest, which the heroes identified with that of their fatherlands, of which they were the sole citizens. Hence they did not hesitate, for the safety of their various fatherlands, to consecrate themselves and their families to the will of the laws, which by maintaining the common security of the fatherland kept secure for each of them a certain private monarchical reign over his family." (38)

LS: You see, they were such great patriots because of their selfishness, but in[104] their consciousness that was not yet clear because the sacredness of the fatherland, the sacredness of the gods for which they fight, conceived what—. There is something of Marxism in there, but not only in Marxism, in many other doctrines. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Moreover it was this great private interest—"

LS: I emphasize again—*private*, private interest. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "in conjunction with the supreme arrogance characteristic of barbarous times, which formed their heroic nature, whence came so many heroic actions in defense of their fatherlands—"

LS: Yes, but behind that we must never forget there is the great *private* interest. That is the debunking which Vico does: reading the Roman histories, the famous stories, of these Roman heroes behind—yes, they are heroic, but—and they believed [them] to be heroes. . . . didn't believe anything except what Livy puts in mouth; but I, Vico, see through that, and see how much this was involved with this private interest. That is—go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> To these heroic deeds we must add the intolerable pride, profound avarice and pitiless cruelty with which the ancient Roman patricians treated the unhappy plebeians, as is clearly seen in Roman history precisely during that period which Livy himself describes as having been the age of Roman virtue and of the most flourishing popular liberty yet dreamed of in Rome. It will then be evident that this public virtue was nothing but a good use which providence made of such grievous, ugly and cruel private vices, in order that the cities might be preserved during a period when the minds of men, intent on particulars, could not naturally understand the common good. (38)

LS: Period! Yes, the common good. The divine providence arranged that the common good be taken care of. By what means? What is the technical term, we can almost say, which Vico uses here?[105]

Student: . . . .

LS: No. Private vices, private vices. Have you ever heard the expression, "private vices" in a theoretical context? There was a man called Mandeville: "private vices, public benefit." The truth that vices like luxury, ostentation and, I don't know, vanity—think what would happen to the American cosmetic industry without female vanity, and what would happen as a consequence to the American economy as a whole.[106] Of course in former times, societies were not constructed according to this principle, at least not consciously; and in modern times indeed it is what happens. But this is a key point of his teaching, that private vices—abominable things—can have a wonderful effect. This cannot be intelligible except on the premise of divine providence, and in this way the civil science, the political science, offers the proof for the existence of God. As some one of you saw before: the invisible hand—that's it. That is, I think, what Vico has in mind. I hope this little point, which is crucial for Vico, has become clear. The[107] selfishness of the individual concerned only[108] with his own well-being leads to the common good. And needless to say (this point came up in the last meeting), this purely theoretical statement has naturally practical consequences; because if this is so, then why should we have laws against vices?[109] Obviously not. Think of the famous story of the usury laws in olden times—usury laws which were meant to be against the vice of avarice. But[110] if the abolition of usury laws leads to the fact that you pay very much less interest than you would pay . . . . Prohibition was a good example; it was the last heroic attempt of a great nation to fight vice . . . . and of course other things in other respects too—other forms of vice. [111]Who made this point last time, by the way, that the theoretical, the purely theoretical assertion on these things is bound to be a practical

assertion at the same time? You made it? Yes, thank you very much, Mr. . . . Good. And now[112] let us read paragraph 39.

Mr. Reinken: "The last type of jurisprudence was that of natural equity, which reigns naturally in the free commonwealths, in which the people, each for his own particular good (without understanding that it is the same for all), are led to command universal laws. They naturally desire these laws—" (39)

LS: Is this correct, Mr. Rotella: "for the particular good of each, which is equal in all"?[113]

Mr. Rotella: Without knowing it.

LS: Yes, but what do they not know? What do they not know that is equally known?

Mr. Rotella: . . . .

LS: What do they not know?

Mr. Rotella: . . . .

LS: . . . Rousseau's general will. Only Rousseau states this . . . . Each thinks only of his own interest with one qualification. My simple example, my self-interest: I don't want to pay any taxes. But when I go to the town meeting, I can no longer think merely in these terms, because I have to say there, "there ought to be a *law* that *no one* should pay taxes." In other words, saying "I won't pay taxes," I would be laughed out of court. But if I say, "there ought to be a law," and I give reasons for that, then it might be accepted. In other words, to propose a law means to generalize my desire, my will, and this is already a great step towards reason, because I consider implicitly everybody else. Something of this kind I think is here implied by the mere fact that[114] out of selfish reasons [they] must have universal laws. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "They naturally desire these laws to bend benignly to the least details of matters calling for equal utility. This is the *aequum bonum*, subject of the latest Roman jurisprudence, which from the times of Cicero had begun to be transformed by the edict of the Roman praetor. This type is also and perhaps even more connatural with the monarchies—"

LS: "Perhaps even more"—if this "perhaps" is to be taken seriously, it means monarchy might be better than democracy. Good. We [will] keep this in mind; whether this will be confirmed or not we don't know. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> in which the monarchs have accustomed their subjects to attend to their own private interests, while they themselves have taken charge of all public affairs, and desire all nations subject to them to be made equal by the laws, in order that all may be equally interested in the state. Wherefore the emperor Hadrian reformed the entire heroic natural law of Rome with the aid of the human natural law of the provinces, and commanded that jurisprudence should be based on the

> Perpetual Edict which Salvius Julianus composed almost entirely from the provincial edicts. (39)

LS: Yes. Is this, by the way, a strict, an order—monarchy is . . . an order in which the only one concerned with the public good is the king, the monarch, and all are strictly concerned with their private lives? This . . . a description of the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth to eighteenth centur[ies], and that [first] became the object[115] of Rousseau's hostile criticism, in terms which have made history . . . . These people, the subjects of the king, they are the *bourgeois*; now *bourgeois* is not[116] [at this time] understood in contradistinction to proletariat, of course, [but rather] in contradistinction to the *citizen* who is concerned himself with the public good. But[117] this critical concept of the *bourgeois* in contradistinction to the citizen was then taken over by Marx with his . . . which you all know. But the description of the monarchy is here the same. There is only one man[118]—because his servants are not in the same position—who is concerned with the common good, and [this is an] indication that the army is not a natural army but a mercenary army. So the citizen-soldier of the ancient republics and of the modern democracies, [is set] over against this stage of the mercenary armies and the citizens who are no longer citizens but *bourgeois*, protected by the absolute monarch but having no concern in the *res publica*. Yes?

Student: Would this be consistent with the final teaching of Hobbes?

LS: Yes, sure. Oh yes, Hobbes liked this state of affairs. Security, sure. And he repeats the[119] somewhat ambiguous statement of Tacitus that if there is such a terrible fellow like Nero, where the simple fellow in the provinces or even in Rome is not particularly in danger—only[120] the courtiers [are]. So, well, we have seen systems in which this distinction between courtiers and the majority of the population is no longer valid, because of the parties which have a big tale of the ruler in modern times—whether communist or fascist, it doesn't make any difference here. Yes. Now laws proper, he makes clear in the next paragraph, belong to the third stage only. Let's only read paragraph 42 and then we [will] stop.

Mr. Reinken:

> Last of all, to state the idea of the book in the briefest summary, the entire engraving represents the three worlds in the order in which the human minds of the gentiles have been raised from earth to heaven. All the hieroglyphs visible on the ground denote the world of nations to which men applied themselves before anything else. The globe in the middle represents the world of nature which the physicists later observed. The hieroglyphs above signify the world of minds and of God which the metaphysicians finally contemplated. (42)

LS: You will see that there is a strict parallelism of the three last sentences, but only in the first and third does he speak of hieroglyphs. The globe is not hieroglyphical. The world of nature is not hieroglyphical. So is Vico's own science hieroglyphical? No, because of course it deals with hieroglyphs, as we shall see; but it[121] [deals] with symbols, as someone might say today, but it is not itself symbolical. It is a non-symbolical science of symbols. It is as non-symbolical as the science of the globe, natural science. It is a natural explanation of the symbolical, and therefore he speaks of the natural right of the nations, the natural genesis of the gods, the natural sequence

of ideas. It is—if we can draw any conclusion from the first statement—a prolongation of natural science; of what kind of natural science, this we have still to see. But according to his claim that part of natural science which proves more than the other parts, divine providence. This goes already beyond the letter of what he says, and we must see whether this is tenable or not. So next time, who will be the speaker? I don't remember. Mr. Glenn, and then Mr. Emmert.

[end of session]

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[1] Delete "this."
[2] Deleted "I can—."
[3] Deleted "Well."
[4] Deleted "explained—."
[5] Deleted "Only—."
[6] Deleted "Only—."
[7] Deleted "And, yes, but what—."
[8] Moved "traditionally" and "also."
[9] Deleted "and."
[10] Deleted "In brief—."
[11] Deleted "to say."
[12] Deleted "he."
[13] Deleted "strive."
[14] Deleted "It's the outcome."
[15] Deleted "The—."
[16] Deleted "so."
[17] Deleted "so."
[18] Moved "sometimes" and deleted "also."
[19] Deleted "no, I don't know—."
[20] Deleted "the first—."
[21] Deleted "The notion—."
[22] Deleted "And whatever the."
[23] Deleted "on it."
[24] Deleted "which."
[25] Deleted "I don't see clearly about that because."
[26] Deleted "a pupil of Darwin."
[27] Deleted "by embryology that the embryo."
[28] Deleted "the."
[29] Deleted "the."
[30] Moved "therefore."
[31] Deleted "in."
[32] Deleted "had."
[33] Moved "something."
[34] Deleted "which."
[35] Transposed "is" and "a."
[36] Deleted "says it's."
[37] Deleted "is concerned."
[38] Deleted "are."
[39] Moved "philology" and "of."
[40] Deleted "of."
[41] Deleted "it."
[42] Deleted "that he did."
[43] Deleted "positing" and "as natural." Moved "as natural."
[44] Deleted "it."
[45] Deleted "You could—."
[46] Deleted "well, let me—."

[47] Deleted “Benedict, no—.”
[48] Deleted “in her.”
[49] Deleted “There may be inferences of.”
[50] Deleted “in.”
[51] Deleted “in this very instance that is what they had in mind. That.”
[52] Deleted “such.”
[53] Moved “The other.”
[54] Deleted “And—.”
[55] Deleted “And out of that—.”
[56] Deleted “No one could—.”
[57] Deleted “of.”
[58] Deleted “That is perfectly—.”
[59] Moved “ever.”
[60] Deleted “And this progress—.”
[61] Deleted “is a description of—this.”
[62] Deleted “And—.”
[63] Deleted “This notion of—how do we get out of that so that we find another point—.”
[64] Deleted “But this is already—.”
[65] Deleted “all.”
[66] Deleted “of course.”
[67] Deleted, “more strong.”
[68] Moved “than their rulers.”
[69] Deleted “is that” and moved “the rulers
[70] Deleted “against them.”
[71] Deleted “The whole arbitrament in arms..”
[72] Deleted “—but.”
[73] Deleted, is.
[74] Deleted “from” and moved “now.”
[75] Deleted “that.”
[76] Deleted “let us—.”
[77] Deleted “then.”
[78] Deleted “it—.”
[79] Moved “now.”
[80] Deleted “very good.”
[81] Deleted “you as.”
[82] Deleted “mere.”
[83] Deleted “a.”
[84] Deleted “Lucretius, Lucretius—.”
[85] Moved “we might be able to solve on that basis.”
[86] Deleted “to.”
[87] Deleted “9.”
[88] Deleted “are certain—there.”
[89] Deleted “god—.”
[90] Deleted “it—.”
[91] Deleted “he makes—he states more the principle—about the middle.”
[92] Deleted “and.”
[93] Deleted, “most.”
[94] Deleted “of pure—.”
[95] Deleted “Now what—.”
[96] Deleted “likely.”
[97] Deleted “it’s the good of the society—.”
[98] Deleted “guiding that—.”
[99] **Student**: . . . . **LS**: Pardon?
[100] Deleted “it is.”
[101] Deleted “or.”
[102] Deleted “It is not” and moved “in itself—.”

[103] Deleted “but makes it dependent.”
[104] Deleted “their—for.”
[105] **Student**: [inaudible words] **LS**: Pardon?
[106] Deleted “So—.”
[107] Deleted “private—the.”
[108] Deleted “with his well-being.”
[109] Deleted “Don’t—.”
[110] Deleted “if this contributes—.”
[111] Deleted “so this is”
[112] Deleted “in paragraph 39—.”
[113] **Student**: [inaudible words] **LS**: Pardon?
[114] Moved “they.”
[115] Moved “first.”
[116] Deleted “now.”
[117] Deleted “this concept—.”
[118] Deleted “or.”
[119] Deleted “statement, a.”
[120] Moved “only.”
[121] Deleted “is.”

Session 5: October 14, 1963

Leo Strauss: I cannot blame you[i] for blaming Vico so much because it is really very difficult to understand . . . . Part of your[1] [difficulty] was caused by you because you thought much too much of the present day troubles. Vico's social science, or . . . is it really not value-free. How could a value-free social scientist speak of private life? So what is the precise question? You spoke at great length (at reasonably great length) of Vico's attack on[2] the Egyptian claims. Now what is the meaning of that account? You made it clear to some extent, but you didn't stick to your guns.[3] I mean you asked the question: "What are the criteria by which Vico can make a distinction between . . . true and false statements?" And what was your guess?

Student: . . . .

LS: I believe you didn't consider sufficiently the content of these papers, I mean the time span claimed by the Egyptians. Now the first . . . right is of the Bible. If [the] pagans' account[s] of the Egyptian . . . contradicts the biblical account, it's wrong. No, whether that is sufficient . . . of Vico is another question, but in itself it makes sense. Now for example, if they speak of, say, something which happened 20,000 years ago this would be incompatible with the literal meaning of *Genesis*. But there may be a claim regarding something which happened, say, 3,000 years ago which is certainly compatible with what the Bible says. And how can we distinguish there between what happened? . . . . We cannot get at this sufficiently on the basis of what we have read . . . . This will be developed in the next section, [which] we [will] start next time, where he will state how early non-Jewish men must have been; whatever is incompatible with this must have been wrong. So in other words, if a high stage of science is claimed for Egypt, or for a very old age of Egypt, this is against human nature and cannot have been. But this avenue we have not yet pursued. Now I think . . . paragraph 47 on which this argument turns altogether. Now what was the . . . Egyptian story? That they possess a wisdom infinitely older than the biblical wisdom. Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, *ergo* the wisdom of the Egyptians antedated Moses, and this can easily be used for anti-biblical purposes.

There is in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, Book 2, chapter 5,[4] a brief reference to Diodorus Siculus, a[5] late Greek historian, who had accepted the Egyptian date that it be 45 . . . [ii] would be the age of Egyptian society. Now this is incompatible with biblical chronology. And Machiavelli alludes to the difficulty; he doesn't develop it, but it is perfectly clear that this was an argument which played a certain role in heretical literature. Yes?

Student: Can I just read a passage from paragraph 9—

LS: Which paragraph?

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Machiavelli says in the passage cited that Diodorus refers to "an account of forty or fifty thousand years" and that his account was therefore dismissed as mere fable.

Student: Paragraph 9, where he says: "The same twofold evidence proves the religion of the Hebrews more ancient than those by which the nations were founded, and hence the truth of the Christian religion."

LS: Yes, sure. Obviously. If you take the state of theological controversy at the time, it's perfectly clear. Everything which contradicts the chronology of the Bible and makes questionable the truth of the Bible, destroys the Christian religion . . . . I mean,[6] if you assume that Christian theology in 1700 so and so was identical with that of Paul Tillich today, then you will not understand a word.

Student: But would all Christians at this time agree that the Hebrews had to be the oldest—

LS: No, of course not.

Student: Then why does he—

LS: But 40,000 years—I will explain it. And I'll give you the ideas from paragraph 47. Now[7] the argument is a bit more subtle than I stated. The Egyptians laid claim to very high wisdom of very ancient antiquity. These are two themes; he doesn't make that quite clear, but we must make it [clear] if we are to follow his argument. First, the most ancient antiquity, say 40,000 years old. This he can, in a way, easily refute by reference to biblical chronology. But there is no reason why the Egyptians should not have had, say, in the year 3,000 B.C. very high wisdom in accordance with these biblical remarks about Moses [being] learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians. And[8] since this is a biblical remark, it is probably compatible with the Bible. Now a simple example. According to the Old Testament report, Moses was . . . but in worldly matters he was not the brightest of men. And the whole grand science of public administration which he needed as a governor he learned from the Midianite Jethro. That's stated in the Bible. Because the Bible is, after all, not primarily concerned with public administration, so why can't you learn it from—no, I mean, in other words, the Bible is more intelligent, if I may say so, than many of its orthodox interpreters who might deny that even public administration could have been non- . . . .

But if we return to Vico, first there is the question of the sheer antiquity of Egypt. And the claims contradict the biblical report. And the second question is the antiquity of Egyptian *wisdom*. This is an entirely different proposition. Vico might have said the Egyptians are really as old as Diodorus Siculus [said], and the Egyptians themselves said it and from this point of view disagree with the Bible. But the key point for him is that wisdom cannot be very old because of the very, very long time needed for ascending from primitive barbarism to high wisdom. This is a distinction which you must always keep in mind.

Now let me first remind myself and you of the bare minimum we found out in our discussion of the *Autobiography* and of the "Explanation of the Frontispiece." I remind you of a simple schema, namely [LS writes on the blackboard] Tacitus equal to Machiavelli, the ought and the is. The synthesis of the two effected by Bacon. Bacon is the third. And then the fourth man is Grotius, by which he indicates that he will achieve the synthesis with a view to law,[9] [which] Bacon had not done. Bacon tried to do it regarding philosophy in general and not law. And the

more specific question is natural right. He will give a teaching regarding natural right which is, in a way, a synthesis of Plato and Machiavelli. This much we retain from the *Autobiography*. Now[10] [what] does this synthesis look like? He starts from the premise—yes, the new science, firstly—the new science will not speak of revealed religion. He will accept it and not be concerned with it. He is concerned only with the natural right of the gentiles.

The gentiles were to begin with (this was[11] after the Fall) on a very low level, like beasts. Like beasts. The Jews were never touched by that, although the Fall, according to the New Testament notion, touched the Jews as well. But Vico's interested in that only very generally, so [he focuses] only [on] the gentiles. And they lived in a beast-like condition, and out of that there emerged a civilization by natural reason alone. By natural reason alone. And the natural right of the gentiles is primarily the right obtaining in this first stage or in the stage immediately after the overcoming of mere beastliness. This is clear. And the key idea here is this: that some degree of virtue, of justice, emerged out of sheer selfishness, of sheer violence. Men prompted by mere selfishness produced society and therewith indirectly a concern with the common good, not because they were concerned with the common good but by a kind of mechanism, we can say. In other words, truly the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith here, only called providence—but "invisible hand" and providence are of course the same thing. So the strictly rational, philosophic proof of divine providence is given by the fact that societies could emerge out of purely asocial or antisocial human beings. And[12] there are various manifestations of the same thing; we will discuss them when we come to them. But this is, I think, the point which must be[13] [kept] in mind. So the natural rights of the nations can be said to have this principle, the emergence of justice out of injustice. And this process[14] [is] a necessary process. Good.

And now let us turn to our assignment for today. First, well, it was a strangely constructed book. First we have a long explanation of the Frontispiece, then we have a long explanation of the Chronological Table. And only in the third section does he begin with the methodic presentation of the new science. But, well, we have to be satisfied with the data as we have them and proceed selectively. Now what he does in the explanation of the Chronological Table, as Mr. . . . pointed out, is a correction of the wrong chronologies of the gentiles. And this refers both to the wrong chronologies regarding the learning of the gentiles which . . . [15] [and] also in other matters. For example, regarding the law of the Twelve Tables and so on.[16] By the way,[17] Vico himself quotes here Diodorus Siculus . . . and the Bible. Now we cannot go into all the details of this purely chronological convention, but externally the discussion looks like this: a defense of biblical chronology against the exorbitant claims of the Egyptians in particular. Now whether this is Vico's last word we must see.

In paragraph 45, he seems . . . read the beginning of paragraph 45.

Mr. Reinken: "But certainly such boundless antiquity did not yield much recondite wisdom to the inland Egyptians." (45)

LS: Yes. So in other words, he grants here apparently the "boundless antiquity" of the Egyptians. The Egyptians may be as old as they claim, i.e. they may be much older than the biblical account would permit, but surely they cannot be so ancient in wisdom. Is this clear? This is a key point because of the savage beginnings. Yes.

Student: What about—in this other passage that I read, he doesn't speak to their wisdom, he just says if their religion—. From the passage, I think he would say [that] if any gentile religion is older than the Hebrew religion, then the truth of the Christian religion is called in[to] doubt.

LS: Yes. And the Christian religion is of course much later than the pagan religions and the question is of the Hebrew, the Jewish religion.

Student: Yes, yes, I know that. The question is whether he might be attacking the truth of the Christian religion. I don't think he considered—

LS: That is the same. Questioning the authority of [the] truth of the Old Testament means to attack the truth of Christianity.

Student: But he says this himself. I ask myself, why does he say this?

LS: This was the common opinion apart from some heretical sects—the Marcionites[iii] who were completely heretical for their times and to some extent the early Socinians[iv] who tried to make the Christian religion wholly independently of the Old Testament. But the orthodox Christian opinion always regarded the Old Testament as part of the Christian revealed documents, and therefore an attack on the historical or other truth of the Old Testament was regarded as an attack on Christianity. It's as simple as that.

Student: I thought that it might be a tactic of simply imputing this view to your opponent so that you can attack him.

LS: Yes, I know that this kind of polemics exists, but in this respect it was not an imputation, it was a fact. To repeat, only Christian heretics like the Marcionites in early Christianity, and to some extent the Socinians (who are now Unitarians) in the sixteenth century, tried to make the authoritative religion wholly independent of the Old Testament. Then he would have to accept Socinianism, which would have been as bad or worse than accepting Protestantism.

Student: . . . .

LS: There is a possibility that he didn't accept even Christianity. That is another matter, but we have no basis—at least not up to now—to assert that.

I repeat this: here he seems to grant the boundless antiquity of Egypt, which would imply a rejection of the Bible as it was then understood, but he surely cannot accept the antiquity of

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[iii] A sect based on the teachings of Marcion of Sinope (c. 85-c. 160), which saw the Hebrew God as a tyrannical being and one of a separate and lower status than the forgiving God of the New Testament.

[iv] The Socinian heresy arose during the Reformation around 1570, but its roots went back to the Arian heresy of the early years of the Catholic Church. In addition to and overshadowing the point Strauss mentions, the Socinians were well known for denying the trinity and hence the divinity of Christ.

wisdom because that would be against the nature of things, men having come from a barbarous beginning, and it takes millennia, so to speak, to get out of that beast-like condition to the stage of wisdom.

He mentions in this connection this paragraph[18], that Greece [was] the nation of the philosophers, i.e. the Greeks are the nation of philosophers, not the Egyptians. And therefore when later on the Egyptians, after they had become aware of Greek philosophy, interpret philosophy into these old Egyptian texts, that is like a present-day Chinese who would say [that] what Confucius say[s] is the same as what . . . say. You know this kind of thing.[19] You know these kinds of people? They are in all places of the world. So his point is that the Greeks are the nation of philosophers and therefore also of the fine arts, i.e. Egyptian art, that is not fine art, that is barbaric . . . and so on and so on. Good.

Here an indication of this whole thing seems to be [that] if philosophy is the characteristic of the third age—you remember the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, the age of human reason—if philosophy is a characteristic of the third age, then the third age doesn't exist in all nations. This is among the Greeks, but not everywhere. We must keep this in mind in order to see[20] [whether] what he calls the ideal history—remember [LS writes on the blackboard] gods, heroes, and men and all the details of it—[21] [is] not necessarily true in all particulars of each individual nation. We will get plenty of evidence of that later. I[22] mention it only in passing.

The Egyptians' prejudice of their unusual antiquity has its reasoning wrong. [It is] not merely[23] a theoretical error, that people simply can't count and they count 20,000 where they should only count 2,000, but there is a passion driving [them] in the direction of this overestimation. In paragraph 48, beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "This false opinion of their great antiquity was caused among the Egyptians by a property of the human mind—that of being indefinite—by which it is often led to believe that the things it does not know are vastly greater than in fact they are." (48)

LS: So here he gives already one of these axioms which we will mention later: that[24] the human mind has the characteristic of being indefinite, which means in a way the same as infinite. And[25] so it makes assertions about things which it doesn't know. And therefore [it makes] the unknown[s] about which it makes assertions by virtue of its infiniteness[26] bigger than they are. Is this clear? Therefore the unknown in the particular remote past is aggrandized infinitely. But what is the motive behind that aggrandizement of the unknown? That he made clear in paragraph 50. This is very long—

Mr. Reinken: "Just as a man could find—"

LS: No, let us read paragraph 50. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "But the Chinese are found writing in hieroglyphs just as the ancient Egyptians did (to say nothing of the Scythians, who did not even know how to put their hieroglyphs in writing). For many thousands of years they had no commerce with other nations by whom they might have been informed concerning the real antiquity—" (50)

LS: By the way, one thing to consider [with] the[27] Chronological Table in hand [is] whether there can be many thousands of years according to the Biblical chronology in this whole period. This I mention only in passing. Yes? In other words, there could be only three at the most. Can you call three many thousands?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, yes. This only in passing, that if one reads this with the necessary care all kinds of difficulties— This is simply one example.[28] You said something about Confucius?

Student: He mentions Confucius later on, and he says that Confucius probably lived about 500 years before Christ and this means that they did have commerce but not . . . there at 500 years before Christ.

LS: But that is very late—

Student: And many thousands of years before even that.

LS: All right, but still, 500 B.C. and let us say 3,000 more; you come to 3,500 which is still compatible with biblical chronology. But this is not . . . here. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Just as a man confined while asleep in a very small dark room, in horror of darkness on waking believes it certainly much larger than groping with his hands will show it to be, so, in the darkness of their chronology, the Chinese and the Egyptians have done, and the Chaldeans likewise." (50)

LS: Yes, what is the motive then? What induces men to regard the unknown as bigger than it is, or grander than it is?

Student: Fear.

LS: Fear. That's all I mean. So this is the point. The motive is fear in these early men, naturally, because they were so weak fundamentally. And you remember the famous thesis of Hobbes that fear started the whole thing.

Now paragraph 51 has been properly appreciated by Mr. . . . in his summary of what preceded before. And here he[29] [says that] the first people of the world were the Hebrew people whose spring was Adam. Now is this an orthodox teaching? Who is the prince, the first father of the Jewish people?

Student: Abraham.

LS: Abraham. That's right. Not Adam, because Adam was the father of all men. Even Abraham is father not only of the Jews but of the Arabs through Ishmael. So Adam, surely not. But there is a doctrine which he will refer to somewhere—he refers somewhere to the pre-Adamites, doesn't

he? Isaac La Peyrère; yes, but you wouldn't know the name, he is quite unknown.[30] Isaac La Peyrère [LS writes on the blackboard]; he wrote in Latin[31] around 1665,[32] in which he tried to prove, on the basis of the chronological difficulty plus the new discoveries in America as well as in the Far East, that the biblical account cannot be literally true.[v] And he tried to reconcile the account by a very complicated interpretation of[33] [St. Paul's] Letter to the Romans with the result that Adam is the ancestor only of the Jews.[34] And this whole story of fall and redemption is a strictly intra-Jewish business—and which means of course that pagan nations (although he doesn't say so) never had a fall and therefore didn't need a redemption. But this is off the subject.

Now but the key point is that the whole biblical history is a Jewish history from the beginning and not only from the Flood, but from Abraham—was . . . . So this I mention only in passing. Let us read then paragraph—we must omit very many things—paragraph 52.

Mr. Reinken: "In this undertaking we shall be greatly helped by the antiquity of the Egyptians, for they have preserved—" (52)

LS: Excuse me. Let us also read the last sentence of 51[35]. "And from this point must begin the universal history."

Mr. Reinken: "This is the proper starting-point for universal history, which all scholars say is defective in its beginnings." (51)

LS: Yes, that is, of course a very grave term, to call the history of the gentiles only—although they are the majority of men—the universal history, contradicting the ordinary meaning of universal which means, of course, of all men. When Bossuet wrote his universal history a generation before Vico, *On Universal History*, it was, of course, the biblical history and integrated into it the data from Greek and Roman and other history. So this shows . . . sign that there is something not quite orthodox. Now paragraph 52 then.

Mr. Reinken: "In this undertaking we shall be greatly helped by the antiquity of the Egyptians, for they have preserved for us two great fragments not less marvelous than their pyramids, namely these two great philological verities. The first is narrated by Herodotus: that the Egyptians reduced all the preceding time of the world to three ages, the first that of the gods, the second that of the heroes, the third that of men. The other (as related in Scheffer's *De natura et constitutione philosophiae italicae seu pythagoricae*) is that, with corresponding number and sequence, through all that period three languages had been spoken: the first hieroglyphic, with sacred characters; the second symbolic, with heroic characters; the third epistolary, with characters agreed on by the peoples." (52)

LS: In other words, there are three ages of . . . and there are correspondingly three ages of languages, which implies that in the first age, in the age of the gods, there was not yet any articulate language. They were really beast-like men. Now of course the great question which we can raise [is]: With what right can he accept these fabulous stories of [the] Egypt[ians] as

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[v] Peyrère published his *Prae-Adamitae* in Latin in 1655. Strauss devotes chapter 3 to him in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Shocken Books, 1965).

historical data? And today no one would do that, obviously. And surely that's impossible in a way. And he can only say, perhaps this is only a kind of . . . invention for Vico's own argument. In other words, will he actually need this tri-partition? In other words, this could be a kind of previous little house, as it were, that he builds up, and which later on he deserts when it becomes unsuitable. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "This division of times was not followed by Marcus Terentius Varro; we must not say because he did not know of it, for, with his boundless erudition, he deserved the honor bestowed on him in the title 'most learned of the Romans' in their most enlightened period, the age of Cicero; but rather because he did not choose to; perhaps because he applied [only] to Roman history what by our principles will be found true of all the ancient nations, namely that all Roman things, divine and human, were native to Latium." (52)

LS: Now let us understand this.[36] First he says (and[37] this is quite a change), what he says in the first half of this paragraph, [is that] the very antiquity of the ancient Egyptians supplies us with the most important keys to their origin. Now that is no formal contradiction because being 4,000 years old, 4,000 B.C., is still very old, of course although it is not 40,000 or . . . .[38] Second, Varro did not wish to say what he knew.[39] He gave the Roman origins instead of [the] universal origins. In other words, in order to recognize the universal character of [the] Romans he found in it only Roman origins. That means[40] he boosted his own. And this is, according to Vico, a general vice of men. That nations adorn themselves all the time with . . . which belong to other . . . and that is . . . . Yet[41] Varro didn't do this is the case of the Law of the Twelve Tables. In the case of the Twelve Tables, he traced them to Greece and didn't say they are indigenous, whereas according to Vico the Law of the Twelve Tables is, in fact, indigenous. Now of course this is another kind of boosting. The savage Romans claimed to have already borrowed from these five nations of the Greeks. Now to what extent this remark about Varro—and this half criticism of Varro—reflects what Vico himself does in regard to the Bible is a question which we must keep in mind, although we cannot yet answer it. In other words, whether Vico's making the Jews the first nation and making the first man, Adam, the ancestor of the Jews and only of the Jews, whether this doesn't correspond to a general inclination of all mankind to boost one's own, this is here only a question.

Now he develops this theme of what we can[42] [call] the boosting of the nations in the next paragraph. Yes, but then, of course, the question arises: If all nations do that, are the Jews not guilty of the same, possibly? Must the critical historian as he . . . . Paragraph 54.

Mr. Reinken: "The first column of the table[vi] is dedicated to the Hebrews, who, on the most reliable authority of Flavius Josephus, the Jew—"

LS: "The Jew" . . . . Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "And Lactantius Firmianus—"

LS: A Christian.

[vi] The table is represented on page 28, the first page of Book 1.

Mr. Reinken: To be cited later, "lived unknown to all the gentile nations. And yet they reckoned rightly the account of the times passed by the world, now accepted as true by the severest critics, according to the calculations of Philo the Jew." (54)

LS: Again, you see . . . . Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "If his estimate varies from that of Eusebius, the deviation is one of a mere fifteen hundred years—"

LS: And what is Eusebius's denomination?

Student: Christian.

LS: Christian, yes.

Mr. Reinken: "which is a very short period of time compared with the variation among the calculations made by the Chaldeans, Scythians, Egyptians, and in our own day by the Chinese. And this should be an invincible proof that the Hebrews were the first people in our world—"

LS: "In our world"[43] is of course a qualification. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and that in the sacred history they have accurately preserved their memories from the very beginning of the world." (54)

LS: "Of *the* world." So after he has indicated the possible difference between our world and other worlds, he goes back to "the world." So what does that say? The claims of the Jews are not open to this criticism because they are based on the most reliable witnesses who happened to be in this case also Jews, suffering from the slight disadvantage that they are not canonic Jews. Josephus, as you know, Josephus was a historian of the destruction of the temple; not being canonic me, I mean . . . . I mean they are canonic neither for Jews nor for . . . . So this is, I think, a brief indication of the problem.

Let us turn to paragraph 83. That seems to be very relevant here.

Mr Reinken: Eighty-three. "Sancuniates writes histories in vulgar letters. Year of the world 2800. Called also Sanchuniathon and entitled 'the historian of truth' (on the authority of Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata*). He wrote the history of Phoenicia in vulgar characters, while—"

LS: I.e. in [an] alphabet. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "while the Egyptians and the Scythians, as we have seen, wrote in hieroglyphs, as the Chinese have been found to do down to our own days. The latter, like the Scythians and the Egyptians, boast a monstrous antiquity because in the darkness of their isolation, having no dealings with other nations, they had no true idea of time." (83) He's said that before.

LS: Yes, but here he says it of the Scythians and the Chinese, that to live separated from the rest of the world makes it impossible to have this desirable chronology. Now the question is: Did he really never think of this complication when he wrote, or did he? It's hard to decide. But the question, I believe, must be raised, however we answer it. Yes. Now, then in the sequel he speaks of[44] the third age of the Chaldeans. Let me just give a survey of that; we cannot possibly read everything.

In paragraph 62 [and] following he shows us the difficulty of reconciling the bestial beginnings of the nations with the biblical account. Now the difficulty [here] I think is[45] this, briefly. Bestial, no articulate language. What does the Bible teach about language? Adam was taught. Adam was taught and had the language. Then what was the next big event regarding language, according to the Bible? The Tower of Babel, i.e. up to the Tower of Babel, [there was] a universal language, all men spoke the same language. According to the traditional view, that was Hebrew—but not the canonic view, only the traditional view as far as I know. Good. But after the Tower of Babel of course there was also *human* language. In other words, the single human language was replaced by a variety of seventy or so different human languages. All human languages, articulate languages. And where is the place in this schema for his gentiles who did not yet have an articulate language? That is the great difficulty into which we cannot go;[46] I have only to point out that we cannot simply take for granted[47] [what] Vico explicitly says. Yes?

Student: From his finding that the Chinese are still writing in hieroglyphic characters, would he say they had not gone beyond the age of the gods?

LS: No, well, yes I suppose he would naturally make a distinction between language and writing. That he would do, but he would say hieroglyphical writing is lower as writing than alphabetic writing. And secondly he would claim on the basis of his axioms that there was a stage when men even spoke hieroglyphically. That's the key point.

Student: But, and then he would say . . . .

LS: [48]Well, [we have not yet come to] what he thinks about it.[49] It's rather like this. First there [are] mere sounds, yes? If you will look at animals and know them a bit you know that they make different sounds on different occasions, when they're gay, and when they are afraid, and so on. And then, in addition, men can do more. Men can also[50] point. They can point. And you can do the same thing: you can go to a shop, for example, and[51] [not] say a word. Simply show this, and he knows you want matches. Yes? And you wouldn't need a word for matches. Swift discusses some of these people in the third part of *Gulliver*, but for other reasons, because they are too abstracted from mundane things, these colors in the . . . and they do this kind of thing. But at any rate, clearly hieroglyphic writing has nothing to do with inarticulate language, but Vico asserts in addition that there was a period of hieroglyphic speaking.[52]

At the end of paragraph 67 there is a remark of some importance about the natural right of the nations. Only the end of paragraph 67.

Mr. Reinken:

> And as if, finally, providence had not made provision for this human necessity: so that, lacking letters, all nations in their barbarian period were first founded on customs, and [only] later, having become civilized, were governed by [statutory] laws! Just as in the second barbarian period the first laws of the new nations of Europe were born in customs, of which the feudal are the most ancient. This should be remembered because of what we shall have to say later: that fiefs were the first origins of all the laws that grew up later among all nations both ancient and modern, and hence the natural law of nations[vii] was established not with [statutory] laws but with these same human customs. (67)

LS: Yes, "statutory," of course, is [an] addition; it's "laws" [in the original]. The natural right does not have the character of laws—written or unwritten—but of customs. I.e. the difference—what is the difference between law and custom? In one sense, it is this: that a custom is how people customarily behave. A custom[53] does not[54] [explicitly] have the character of an "ought." Law, written or unwritten, has it. Do this or do that. You know, custom is something . . . .

The first stage, the natural right of nations, has the character of custom, as distinguished from laws, written or unwritten. This I believe we must keep in mind.[55]

Paragraph 79. Well it's a minor thing, but it's just to give you an idea of what one has to consider. The last sentence of paragraph 79—the idea was referred to by Mr. . . . 's paper.

Mr. Reinken: "So, in the life of one man, so many civil things were accomplished—"

LS: No, only the last sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "It was perhaps because of all this that Cicero in his *On the Nature of the Gods* suspected that such a person as Orpheus never existed in the world." (79)

LS: Yes, yes. Now, as you could easily find out, that passage occurs in the First Book, paragraph 107, of *De natura deorum*, and that is the Epicurean book; in the first book the Epicurean presents his talk. And in addition, it's very interesting, this thesis regarding . . . which Vico doesn't mention.

This anticipates a larger point which we will make the more we advance. To some extent what Vico is doing is only[56] [restoring] the view held by a number of ancient men, and not necessarily [only by] such extremists as the Epicureans, but also by Aristotle [and] Polybius. In other words, to some extent what Vico does is in no way peculiarly modern, but [is] only[57] [to] critique[58] past traditions which had come to be believed [in] much more in the times, say, after Polybius, than[59] in the high period of Greek or Roman thought.

In the sequel, paragraphs 80 and 81, Vico gives a kind of vindication of the allegedly immoral mythology of the pagans. In other words, the original men—the men who became, as it were,

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[vii] The class text reads: "the natural law of the gentes." Here and often elsewhere, Mr. Reinken substitutes "nation," a common translation for *gente.* Perhaps Bergin and Fisch leave *gente* untranslated to distinguish it from *nazione*.

human beings out of savages—were not the originators of these immoral fables of Greek mythology.[60] [These were the] product[s] of the dissolute state of Greek or Roman society. Originally these stories of adultery and murders and so [on] had an entirely different meaning. This he develops here.

In 82 we find a simple formulation of Vico's principle of mythologic interpretation, over which Mr. Glenn was looking. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Hercules, with whom the heroic time of Greece reaches its climax: The same difficulties recur for Hercules if we take him for a real man, the companion of Jason in the expedition to Colchis, and not, as we shall find him to be in respect of his labors, a heroic character of the founder of peoples." (82)

LS: So in other words, there is one . . . of his interpretation. Early men[61] [were] unable to form universal concepts—of the founder, [for example], which would apply to any founder. And therefore they use[d] the proper name, Hercules. And then there were of course *n* Hercules, and all these things are ascribed to individuals. But once one has understood this mentality of what was called later on the *pre*-logical mind, then one has the key to the interpretation of early stories. And how does he establish this principle? [By recognizing] that early man is something like a child, and so by observing the defects of children's minds we[62] [can also] understand somewhat the defects of early minds. And then all these things fall into shape. Now, that this is a very questionable procedure is clear, but we must first see this point. Paragraph 85.

Mr. Reinken: "Sesostris reigns in Thebes[viii]: This king brought under his empire the three other dynasties of Egypt, and is evidently the king Ramses of whom the Egyptian priest tells Germanicus in Tacitus." (85)

LS: Yes, well what I could not figure out is how this is related to the date of the Mosaic legislation. One would have to study paragraph 44 in connection with it. We cannot do that. Let us read, then, paragraph 86, the second part.

Mr. Reinken: "Nor should this cause surprise when the chronologists themselves vary as much as four hundred and sixty years in dating Homer, the author nearest to these affairs of the Greeks."

LS: You see,[63] he regarded 1550 years as a trivial difference in the case of Eusebius and Philo. Do you remember that? Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "[Our reason is that] in magnificence and delicacy Syracuse at the time of the Punic wars had nothing to envy Athens itself, and luxury and splendor of customs reach the islands later than the continents. The Croton of Livy's time calls forth his compassion because of its small number of inhabitants, when it had once had a population of several million." (86)

LS: You see, now he uses atrocious . . . himself, Vico. There is, of course, no evidence for such . . . in Livy or anyone else. Now, beginning of paragraph 88.

[viii] Mr. Reinken omits "Year of the world 2949."

Mr. Reinken:

> But just as the clouds are dispersed by the sun, so all the magnificent opinions that have been held up to now concerning the beginnings of Rome and of all the other cities that have been capitals of famous nations are dispersed by this golden passage of Varro (quoted by St. Augustine in his *City of God*): that Rome, under the kings, who reigned there for two hundred and fifty years, subdued more than twenty peoples and did not extend her empire more than twenty miles. (88)

LS: In other words, here and there we get reports which show the smallness of the ancient things. I mean, in the light of these small numbers we have a criterion for dismissing the large figures, especially if we know this axiom: that people make[64] the unknown [bigger], and that[65] [this] is due to fear.[66] What are the data regarding the battle of the Persians? Do you know?

Student: Something like two million.

LS: And what do they now say they are? Eighty thousand?

Student: Eighty thousand.

LS: Yes. So this is of course apt to be . . . I mean, the reduction of these very big figures. Whether the explanation of these big figures given by Vico is a sound one[67] does not matter, but the fact is now generally accepted—which doesn't make it true, by the way, but only shows the historical successes of Vico.

All these remarks here deal with the absolutely unreliable character of early chronology. Well, we cannot go into that. Let us see one thing of somewhat broader importance. Paragraph 92. No, let us read first paragraph 91.

Mr. Reinken: "Aesop, vulgar moral philosopher."

LS: I.e. not the true philosopher.

Mr. Reinken: "In the section on Poetic Logic it will be found that Aesop was not an individual man in nature, but an imaginative type or poetic character of the *socii* or *famuli* of the heroes, who certainly came before the Seven Sages of Greece." (91)

LS: Yes, this is the point, that to recognize that these early individuals before . . . are not individuals but types, poetic characters. That is one key point. And those of you who know something of the history of Old Testament criticism in the nineteenth century will know that the same was done with the Old Testament persons. For example, the twelve sons of Jacob—these are simply poetic indications of the type as such, the alleged poetic ancestor. The same principle was applied to the patriarchs. Today they have changed it in this particular case. But [I think] the way of thinking of this principle[68] was first stated by Vico: that[69] individuals spoken of by early men are not necessarily real individuals. It is stated negatively, but of course it is perfectly defensible.

Now the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Thales began with too simple a principle: water, perhaps because he had seen gourds grow in water." (92)

LS: What is the meaning of this simple remark? Because this remark about Thales stems, so to speak, straight from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book 1. But what is the meaning of this remark here? This is a characteristic early thinking, [it is] very simplistic. And so[70] if you find the wisdom of Plato in a text [that was] allegedly written in . . . 3,000 B.C., you know this can't be right.

In the next paragraph he refers to a passage in Livy, what Livy says about Pythagoras, which shows again [that] Livy was on the whole quite sober, just as Aristotle was. And with these sober men of the past—these Romans and Greeks—Vico is in agreement and[71] in a way he does nothing more than try to restore that sobriety. To that extent there is no originality.

Paragraph 94. Yes. This is worth reading.

Mr. Reinken: "Need we go so far as to appeal here to the authority of Lactantius, who firmly denies that Pythagoras was the disciple of Isaiah?"

LS: You see, that's of course a part of the traditional law. Since the Jews are the elected people, all wisdom is of Jewish origin. And therefore, Pythagoras and, needless to say, Plato too, must have been pupils, indirectly, of Moses or of the Hebrew fathers. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "This authority is strongly supported by a passage in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus the Jew, which proves that the Hebrews in the times of Homer and Pythagoras lived unknown to their nearest inland neighbors, to say nothing of remote nations overseas." (94)

LS: Let us skip this immediate sequel and go on to where he again refers to Josephus.

Mr. Reinken: "Josephus himself freely admits that—"

LS: Freely is to be *generosamente*: *g*enerously.

Mr. Reinken: Generously.

LS: Yes. It is an act of a generous man to do that. In other words, if he had not been generous he would have claimed the Jewish origin of Greek wisdom.

Mr. Reinken: "admits their obscurity and gives these reasons for it: 'We do not live,' he says, 'on the seashore, nor do we delight in trading or in having dealings with foreigners for the sake of trade.'" (94)

LS: So there is no doubt that Josephus actually said it, because it is literally quoted from Josephus in the Italian translation. So there is then no Jewish origin of Greek wisdom; hence the wisdom of the gentiles must be understood as having come into being out of a state of bestiality, you know?[72] If gentile history is only the corrupted Jewish history, then that is[73] [one] explanation. The other explanation is the explanation of the gentiles themselves. But since the gentiles admittedly started from a bestial beginning, then the task of the historian, or the explainer, is to see how these almost beast-like men have developed so that they are capable of the high wisdom of the Greeks.

The Jews lived in complete isolation as Josephus generously grants, hence on the basis of what we had discussed before, the biblical chronology must be utterly unreliable—I mean, if this argument of paragraph 83 is valid.

Then in paragraph 95, I think this you should read again.

Mr. Reinken:

> But by the nature of these civil things [it is to be considered impossible] that over confines [such as those] whose trespass was forbidden even by the highly civilized Egyptians (who were so inhospitable to the Greeks that even a long time after they had opened Egypt to them it was forbidden to use a Greek pot, spit, or knife, or even [to eat] meat cut by a Greek knife), over harsh and forbidding paths, without any language in common, and among the Hebrews of whom it was proverbially said by the gentiles that they would not so much as point the way to a fountain for a thirsty foreigner, the prophets should have profaned their "sacred" doctrine by making it accessible to foreigners, new men unknown to them; for in all nations of the world the priests kept such doctrine secret even from their own plebs, whence indeed it was everywhere called "sacred" doctrine, for sacred is as much as to say "secret." And from this there emerges a most luminous proof of the truth of the Christian religion: that Pythagoras and Plato, by grace of a most sublime human science, had exalted themselves to some extent to the knowledge of the divine truths which the Hebrews had been taught by the true God; and on the other hand there arises a weighty confutation of the errors of recent mythologists, who believe that the fables are sacred stories corrupted by the gentile nations and especially by the Greeks. (95)

LS: Let us stop here. Now what about this "luminous proof" of the truth of the Christian religion? How does the proof run? The greatest gentile philosophers found out a part of the Christian teaching by analysis of reason. Hence, this teaching is not merely known by revelation, but also rationally. This, I believe, is what he means by the proof. But it has of course another side to it. To assert that the pagans did not learn anything from the Jews . . . And on the other hand, of course, it has also this meaning. That the wisdom of the gentiles could not have come from the Jews because the Jews lived in complete isolation. They did not mingle with the gentiles at all, and they were even more than . . . that's the other one—than the Egyptians who, compared with the Jews (that's my interpretation) were most humane (meaning most hospitable), and yet—what did they . . . to do? They were quite inhospitable. The Jews, still more inhospitable. But of course, whatever the ancient gentiles' remarks about the Jews[74] [were],

surely the notion that the majority of the people around were idolaters, worshipping abominations,[75] affected the Jew's hospitality or inhospitality. There is no question . . . .

Mr. Reinken:

> To these Scythians belongs Anacharsis, author of the Scythian oracles, as Zoroaster was of the Chaldean. They must first have been oracles of soothsayers, which later, by the vanity of the learned, were turned into oracles of philosophers. From the Hyperboreans of Scythia (either this one or another born anciently within Greece itself) there came to Greece the two most famous oracles of the gentiles, the Delphic and the Dodonian; so Herodotus believed, and after him Pindar and Pherenicus, who are followed by Cicero in his *On the Nature of the Gods*. This may explain why Anacharsis was proclaimed a famous author of oracles and numbered among the most ancient soothsaying gods, as we shall see in the [section on] Poetic Geography. Meanwhile, to show how learned Scythia was in recondite wisdom, let it suffice that the Scythians would stick a knife in the ground and adore it as a god, in order to justify the killings they were about to perform. From this wild religion emerged all the civil and moral virtues narrated by Diodorus Siculus, Justin, Pliny, and lauded to the skies by Horace. Thence Abaris [i.e. Anacharsis], wishing to order Scythia by the laws of Greece, was killed by Caduidas his brother. Such was his profit from the 'barbarian philosophy' of van Heurn that—

LS: Heurn was a seventeenth-century writer in Holland, I believe.[ix] Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> that he did not discern by himself the laws needed to bring a barbarian people to a humane civilization, but had to learn them from the Greeks! For the very same thing is true of the Greeks in relation to the Scythians which we have said of them a while ago in relation to the Egyptians: that by their vanity in giving to their knowledge high-sounding origins of foreign antiquity, they truly deserved the reproof they represented the Egyptian priest as giving to Solon (as related by Critias in the first or second *Alcibiades* of Plato.)

LS: Which is the wrong reference. Because it is in the *Timaeus*. Yes?[x]

Mr. Reinken: "namely that the Greeks had always been children. And so it must be said that by this vanity[xi] the Greeks, in relation both to the Scythians and to the Egyptians, lost as much in real merit as they gained in vain glory." (100)

LS: . . . The vanity of the peoples in giving themselves ancient origins, much more ancient and higher than they were, we know [already]. But he will find something different [now]: the vanity of giving one's own knowledge origins of *foreign* antiquity. After all, that's not quite the same as

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[ix] Otto van Heurn (1577-1652), a Dutch physician who also wrote on the history of philosophy and theology.

[x] *Timaeus* 22b.

[xi] Strauss and Mr. Reinken substitute "vanity" for "conceit," which is used in the translation.

boasting of one's own greatness. What's the reason? Why do they do that? Well, there is one simple reason: because one's own antiquity is not ancient enough, and somehow one knows the nation is only four hundred years old, let me say, and that's not very old[76]—[but to] say [that] our first ancestors got this from people born back indefinitely is different. I just wonder whether he might not have in mind also the alleged Jewish origin of much of Christian wisdom. It's possible; I do not know. But of course[77] foreign antiquity is naturally still more unknown (other things being equal) than one's own antiquity, and therefore foreign antiquity might be more likely[78] to be boosted than one's own antiquity. This is the point which we must keep in mind. Now we turn to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "The Peloponnesian War—"

LS: We don't need to—

Mr. Reinken: No brackets;[xii] ok.

> Thucydides was a young man at the time when Herodotus, who might have been his father, was already old. He lived in the most glorious age of Greece, which was that of the Peloponnesian war, and since he was a contemporary of this struggle he wrote its history in order to write of true things. By him it was said that down to his father's time, which was also that of Herodotus, the Greeks knew nothing of their own antiquities. What then can we think of the things they wrote of the barbarians? And we know of ancient barbarian history only what they tell us. And what must we think of the antiquities of the Romans, up to the time of the Carthaginian wars, in view of the fact that until then they had been concerned only with agriculture and military affairs, when Thucydides establishes this truth about his own Greeks, who so promptly came forth as philosophers? Unless, perhaps, we are willing to say that the Romans had had some particular privilege from God. (101)

LS: You see that this could also be interpreted in a mischievous manner. In other words, unless we say of the Romans what we say of the Jews, then they could—so,[79] at any rate, [a] the decisive consequence for the whole book: a profound distrust of all traditional views of antiquity, of the early times of nations. And *the* authority, more than any other individual, is Thucydides, because [of] Thucydides' famous archaeology. It's the first nineteen chapters of his *History*, in which he makes this clear: that only from[80] roughly[81] the Persian Wars on can one speak with any[82] certainty, and applying some general canons of criticism he could make some guesses about the Trojan War.[83] True history begins, say, with the Persian War. And now[84] Vico tries to restore [this critical view of the past] regarding the whole past, not only the Italian past or so, but regarding all ancient nations. And the implication here, when he speaks of Thucydides—that which is his truth about . . . in the time of the philosophers—[is that] no history proper (I mean history free from all fabulous elements) [is] to be expected where there are no philosophers. Philosophers, we could say, are the necessary condition, not the sufficient—something else

[xii] Mr. Reinken confirms that he will not be reading the bracketed synopses that precede many of the paragraphs in this section.

is . . . . And I think I will leave this for the end, [it] is an allusion to the question of the character of biblical history, given his premises.

Now for us, who try to understand what Vico's peculiar contribution was, this is of course not sufficient because this critical position toward all traditions is not—I mean, apart from figures like Thucydides,[85] and surely Aristotle, to some extent also Livy, and of course Tacitus—is not sufficient because it had been restored in modern times. In the seventeenth century, Spinoza especially had applied fundamentally the same criteria to the Old Testament. This is the conclusion which is crucial as a model for Vico, even if Vico would not have accepted it regarding the Bible, but the argument is the same: that the Mosaic books are not older than Ezra, that is to say, roughly in the fourth century. I don't know the exact date—no, fifth century B.C., and not as was previously assumed a thousand years earlier. And this has of course infinite consequences. Now people have of course qualified this immensely, even the most critical people today regarding many parts of the Mosaic book, the Pentateuch, but the overall position is now generally accepted. And so still I would say that Vico's achievement for good or ill is . . . and so Vico probably[86] defended it more explicitly than any earlier modern writer. But the principle, to repeat, [is] that[87] the accounts of antiquity—unless there is present a solid chronology, which in its turn requires some degree of natural science (observations of the sun and moon)—must be distrusted. Now of course the distrust can also have more particular motives, a kind of contempt for antiquity, which is not essential to the whole thing. We must see this later.

One very important point is brought up again in paragraph[88] 105. This is the whole discussion of Roman affairs, and here especially of the *lex publilia*. Paragraph 105.[89]

Mr. Reinken:

> This law and the subsequent Petelian Law, which is of equal importance, remain unknown because of these three words which are not defined: "people," "kingdom," and "liberty." Because of these words it has been commonly but erroneously believed that the Roman people from the time of Romulus have been composed of citizens both noble and plebeian, that the Roman kingdom had been monarchical, and that the liberties set up by Brutus had been a popular liberty.

LS: "Popular" means democratic. Yes, something like that, yes.

Mr. Reinken: "And these three words, not properly defined, have led into error all the critics, historians, political theorists and jurists because from none of these words could they get a clear idea of the heroic commonwealths, which were of a most severely aristocratic form and therefore entirely different from those of our time." (105)

LS: This is of course one of the key principles of all critical history: that the very terms used may have changed their meaning radically. That [a] word like "freedom," or like "people"—*popolo*—or, what is the third word, like "kingdom" may mean *very* different things, and you cannot possibly read the notions with which you are familiar from your own society into the ancient texts. And I think Vico's point here in this Roman section is [that] he claims to have

discovered[90] the character of the earliest commonwealth[91] [to be] radically different from that of the historically known commonwealth of the period of the . . . or anything of this kind.

By the way, one of the most important passages[92] [that shows us] that this notion of the early times of mankind is in no way novel or peculiar to Vico, or maybe to Hobbes, is in Plato himself. I mean, in other words, not only Lucretius, to whom I referred earlier,[93] [but also] especially in the Third Book of Plato's *Laws*, 678d-e and 680a-681d.[94] What Plato does, very quickly, is this: he creates the impression that the early age was a very nice age . . . . But then when you read on more carefully, you see it was—well, why was it free from the vices of civilization—of course, of disintegration? It was a very savage age. Plato does not state there explicitly what one can only know: that the first age was an age of people like the cyclops in Homer. Of course one can read Homer and then you'll see what kind of a fellow the cyclops was.[95] Then you should look up the other pages in the *Laws* themselves where Plato speaks of the cyclops, and there he makes it perfectly clear that this was a cannibalistic way of life—you know, very far from any humanity. This is simply restored by Vico and probably more on the basis of Lucretius than on the basis of Plato. You know from his *Autobiography*[96] [that] there was a certain stage[97] when his environment in Naples was infected by the Epicureans—you remember that.

Let us read only a few more passages; paragraph 109.

Mr. Reinken:

> In consequence of all this, the nobles, proceeding to take back the fields from the plebs after they had cultivated them, and the latter having no civil action for laying claim to them, the plebeian tribunes now appealed to the Law of the Twelve Tables (by which, as is demonstrated in the *Principles of Universal Law*, no other affair than this was settled). By this law the nobles conceded to the plebs the quiritary ownership of the fields. This civil ownership is permitted to foreigners by the natural law of the nations. And this was the *second* agrarian law of the ancient nations. (109)

LS: Yes, now what does this precisely mean? Quiritarian dominion means of course the same dominion which the patricians have, whereas previously[98] [the plebeians] had only a bonitary right, which means a lower right than that of the patricians and which means the true property remains in patrician hands. Now they become genuine property owners. What does he say here about the natural right of the nations? This, the natural right of the nations, permits civil dominion, full property rights, to strangers. It permits it. I think we have to take this very literally. It does not impose[99] it; in other words, if people want to withhold it, [if] patricians, or people, citizens of a given community want to withhold this kind of right from foreigners, they may do so. But it permits it, whereas the older stratum of right would forbid it as incompatible with the divine character of the property. Ancient law . . . the religious foundations of property and matrimony in Greece and Rome, and where giving full property and connubial right[s] to non-patricians was of course a sacrilegious act. The natural right of the gentiles at a certain stage of development, which is also implied, does away with these superstitious restrictions and permits it. Whether they should give these rights to strangers will be entirely left to considerations of utility, to reasons of state, as it were. But there is no longer the clear prohibition. I think that is what he means here. Two more paragraphs; paragraph 111.

Mr. Reinken:

> In this way the tribunes of the plebs, by pursuing the function for which they were created, that of protecting the natural liberty of the plebeians, were gradually led to secure for them the whole range of civil liberty as well. And the census ordered by Servius Tullius—with the subsequent permission that payment should no longer be made to the nobles privately but to the public treasury, so that the treasury might supply to the plebeians the expenses of war—developed naturally from a basis of liberty for the lords into a basis of popular liberty. Further on we shall see the way in which this came about. (111)

LS: The tone must be put on "naturally," *naturalmente*. This is a natural process, a process in the nature of things, that these serfs, the plebeians, will gradually assert themselves against the patricians, especially if the patricians in question are warlike, as the Roman were, needing the plebs for the wars; and once you arm these fellows, they will claim rights with some effectiveness. We have examples of this kind in our own age. And then there will be this natural transition from a kind of *favor* to the plebs, given by the patricians, to firm *legal* recognition of the plebeian rights, culminating in full equality of the plebeians, at least as far as law is concerned. In other words, it will be . . . for the census to be increased, and of course the *connubium*, the right of intermarriage,[100] [when] a patrician marries a plebeian or vice-versa. This is a kind of . . . than in marriage.

The last point we should mention is paragraph 114.

Mr. Reinken: "If we read further into the history of Rome in the light of this hypothesis, we shall find by a thousand proofs that it provides a foundation for all the things therein narrated, which have lacked a common foundation and a proper and particular connection among themselves because the three aforesaid words were undefined. Wherefore this hypothesis should be accepted as a proof.—" (114)

LS: The three important words were "people," kingdom," and "liberty." It was understood that the Roman people, say, after the expulsion of the kings, were the patricians, and they're not . . . and the same applies to . . . later on. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> However, if properly considered, this is not so much a hypothesis as a truth meditated in idea which later will be shown authoritatively to be the fact. And—granted Livy's generalization that the asylums were "an old counsel of founders of cities," as Romulus founded the city of Rome within the asylum opened in the forest—this hypothesis gives us also the history of all the other cities in the world in times we have so far despaired of knowing. This then is an instance of ideal eternal history (which will later be meditated and discovered) whose course is run in time by the histories of all nations. (114)

LS: Yes. Do you see the point? The ideal history is not a mere hypothesis. The ideal history is that course which each nation undergoes by necessity, from barbaric beginnings, savage

beginnings, to something[101] like [a] commonwealth—democratic or monarchic—and then decay. This is not a hypothesis, but the ideal history.[102] It is ideal history because it is only the core of that history; accidental things[103] [distinguish] one city from the other of course. Later on we will see that the ideal history itself is something like a construct and not strictly speaking a law, but for the time being we leave it at the fact that it is more than a construct, it is the essential necessity of this development. How come it is more than a hypothesis? How can Vico make it more than a hypothesis? After all, even if he would investigate Rome, Romans, and would find that in Rome it actually happened this way: first,[104] rather savage patricians uniting for their mutual defense against the serfs, the plebs, as well as against farmers of course; and then gradually being forced by the nature of things[105] to give rights to the plebeians, and so forth.[106] If this of course would prove[107] true [only] regarding Rome, it would not be universal. How can he give this—I'll repeat my question: What distinguishes the ideal history—the ideal, eternal history—from a hypothesis? What makes it more than a hypothesis, apart from the historical proofs?

Student: Is it the necessity by divine providence?

LS: The divine providence itself has to be established, should be established. It cannot be deduced from it because divine providence could proceed in *n* different ways.

Student: But isn't that just the problem, that it does proceed in *n* different ways?

LS: Yes, but then you cannot say this and only this way is the one—is the true one, the true way, the way which divine providence has established. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: . . . .

LS: Yes, well we'll come to that later. Quite a few.[108] In other words, the ideal history is something like what Max Weber later on called an ideal type and not . . . but later on.[109] We have not yet heard this requirement.

Student: But if you test it empirically, it should be shown to be true.

LS: Yes, but still, then it ceases—sure, that is a difficult question. But prior to that testing, which hitherto has not been made because the testing by the Roman history alone would not give it that status.

Student: Vico may not treat it as a hypothesis if he starts with another hypothesis, which is that divine providence has fundamentally one of two ways of acting: for the Hebrews, and for all others, and as a consequence what he learns from Roman and Greek development can be generalized.

LS: But after all,[110] what evidence do we have? And one could perhaps in a sufficiently broad generalization say that the Chinese too came from a kind of early patricians, then to the monarchy, which is the trajectory. But I believe that in fact it is very simple as we will see in the[111] next section: axioms regarding human nature establish the eternal history,[112] and then out

of the eternal history we can then look at the past and see whether the past comes fully out in agreement with it, and then we will see there is no full agreement. Think of one fact which we mentioned today: philosophers, which [are] an important part of the history, did not exist in Egypt, Scythia, and so on, and in Rome only derivatively from Greece[113]. But there are more examples. There is also something on this subject in paragraph 118. Last paragraph of this section.

Mr. Reinken:

> It can be seen by our reasoning in these Notes that all that has come down to us from the ancient gentile nations for the times covered by this Table is most uncertain. So that in all this we have entered as it were into a no man's land where the rule of law obtains that "the [first] occupant acquires title." For this reason, we trust therefore that we shall offend no man's right if we often reason differently and at times in direct opposition to the opinions which have been held up to now concerning the beginnings of the humanity of the nations.

LS: So he refers to what he called in the frontispiece this density, you know, this dense thing, and therefore any guess is to be permitted because it is absolutely dark. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "By so doing we shall reduce these beginnings to scientific principles by which the facts of certain history may be assigned their first origins, on which they rest and by which they are reconciled. For up until now they do not seem to have had any common foundation, nor any continuous sequence, nor any coherence among themselves." (118)

LS: Yes, so you see he states it here somewhat differently: there are facts of certainty i.e. from a certain moment on we can trust, say, [that] Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is substantially correct, as admitted even today. And[114] also the general character of the Persian Wars—that's *certain* history. This is one term. And then the only thing we have to know is the . . . so to speak, when certain history begins.[115] Here is the realm of uncertainty, and here begins the primary term by our certainty regarding human nature prior to any civilization. And then we connect them. And then we find a number of data which make sense of fables, which make sense, and then we know these fables are more than fables . . . mere fables.[116] In this moment [it] occurs to me that I only restated, surely not literally, what Rousseau says about his method in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, when he speaks of two terms, you remember? At the end of the first part of the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. But he states it somewhat differently; but the problem is the same: How to reconstruct something regarding which there is the greatest uncertainty if you have—you remember it? I don't know it by heart.

Well, next time Mr. . . . will give us a report about the Elements . . . these are the elements of the whole work. In a way we have heard hitherto only assertions, an explanation of the frontispiece, and [an] explanation of the chronological table, and not yet the argument proper, and the argument proper begins next time. Good.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "difficulties."
[2] Deleted "—on."

[3] Deleted “You brought out—.”
[4] Deleted “there is.”
[5] Deleted “Greek historian—.”
[6] Deleted “you cannot—.”
[7] Deleted “what he calls—.”
[8] Deleted “this is no way—and.”
[9] Deleted “what.”
[10] Deleted “how.”
[11] Deleted “the fall, or.”
[12] Deleted “this—.”
[13] Deleted “keep.”
[14] Deleted “being.”
[15] Deleted “but.”
[16] Deleted “In paragraph—.”
[17] Deleted “he quotes—.”
[18] Deleted “he calls—.”
[19] Deleted “This in other words—.”
[20] Deleted “that.”
[21] Deleted “they are.”
[22] Deleted “mentioned.”
[23] Deleted “in.”
[24] Deleted “whatever the human mind—no.”
[25] Deleted “by virtue—.”
[26] Moved “it makes.”
[27] Deleted “chronology.”
[28] Deleted “What about—.”
[29] Deleted “speaks.”
[30] Deleted “I haven’t ever—.”
[31] Deleted “about.”
[32] Moved “a book, *Pre-Adamites*.”
[33] Deleted “the.”
[34] Deleted “Only of the Jews.”
[35] Moved “let us also read.”
[36] Deleted “Varro did not—.”
[37] Deleted “that.”
[38] Deleted “The.”
[39] Deleted “Varro did not wish to say whet he knew.”
[40] Deleted “he boasted—he boosted, I’m sorry.”
[41] Deleted “he did not do this.”
[42] Deleted “say.”
[43] Deleted “—‘in our world’.”
[44] Deleted “the three age of—or rather.”
[45] Moved “here.”
[46] Deleted “which.”
[47] Deleted “that.”
[48] Deleted “In an early stage there—.”
[49] Deleted “I have not yet,” moved “we have not yet come to,” and deleted “it.”
[50] Deleted “use—.”
[51] Deleted “don’t.”
[52] Deleted “Let us—.”
[53] Deleted “it.”
[54] Moved “explicitly.”
[55] Deleted “Then he gives—.”
[56] Deleted “a restoration of.”
[57] Deleted “a.”
[58] Deleted “of.”

[59] Deleted “they were believed.”
[60] Deleted “This was already a.”
[61] Deleted “did not—was.”
[62] Deleted “see—.”
[63] Deleted “compare this with—.”
[64] Moved “bigger.”
[65] Deleted “making bigger.”
[66] Deleted “So in case of doubt—.”
[67] Deleted “it.”
[68] Moved “I think.”
[69] Deleted “early men—.”
[70] Deleted “but.”
[71] Deleted “in a way—.”
[72] Deleted “Otherwise,.”
[73] Deleted “an.”
[74] Deleted “are.”
[75] Deleted “surely.”
[76] Deleted “and.”
[77] Deleted “the difficulty.”
[78] Deleted “to be—still more likely.”
[79] Deleted “but this—.”
[80] Deleted “a certain—.”
[81] Deleted “from.”
[82] Deleted “—could he speak with any.”
[83] Deleted “But this is—,”
[84] Moved “this critical view of the past” and Deleted “is—.”
[85] Deleted “and to some extent.”
[86] Deleted “stated it,.”
[87] Deleted “antiquity.”
[88] Deleted “155.”
[89] Deleted “Pardon?”
[90] Deleted “the earliest commonwealth.”
[91] Deleted “as.”
[92] Deleted “in order to see.”
[93] Deleted “and.”
[94] Deleted “this must be read with—.”
[95] Deleted “But if you—this is rather troublesome—.”
[96] Moved “when.”
[97] Deleted “where.”
[98] Deleted “they.”
[99] Deleted “on.”
[100] Deleted “the marrying—.”
[101] Deleted “like civil—.”
[102] Deleted “How can such an ideal history be—.”
[103] Deleted “, different distinguishing.”
[104] Deleted “a very.”
[105] Deleted “to become—.”
[106] Deleted “how can he—.”
[107] Moved “only.”
[108] Deleted “It is.”
[109] Deleted “For the time being.”
[110] Deleted “there are—.”
[111] Deleted “next paragraph—.”
[112] Deleted “—establishes the eternal history.”
[113] Deleted “so.”
[114] Deleted “that.”

[115] Deleted “And.”
[116] Deleted “It.”

Session 6: October 16, 1963

Leo Strauss: . . . Now, I would like to take up a few points.[i] You began by speaking about[1] [Vico's] relation to Bacon and you quoted something from Vico, or was it not from Vico? Right at the beginning.

Student: Yes . . . .

LS: It is from Vico himself? Where is it?

Student: 164. Paragraph 164.

LS: I see. Thank you very much. That is, I think, decisive. I didn't remember where I had formed this opinion, but I was sure in my mind that what Bacon[ii] does is not simply to reject modern natural science, but to extend it in its spirit. This is somewhat contrary to the interpretation given by Croce, among others, according to which it is something entirely new and not related—I mean, entirely polemical to natural science and not a continuum. The kinship between modern history, what they now call scientific history, and Baconian science was stated very powerfully by Collingwood in his *Idea of History*.[iii] I mean, one may have [some doubts about] Collingwood in other respects,[2] but this is a very impressive statement which you can easily find by looking up the index of Collingwood's book, *The Idea of History*. Now this was the first point.

Now regarding the distinction between the[3] true and the certain, I have read all kinds of things in Croce and other writers. What I found in reading Vico is something very different. Now what Croce says may be based on the other writings of Vico, for all I know; I cannot say where. Now as you stated it, it means that Vico tries to bring about a coincidence of the true and the certain. Whether we can leave it at that I do not yet know, but that there is such a thing going on in the modern world is true. We only have to say it slightly differently. In the older scheme, say, [of] Plato and Aristotle, one can say . . . this: the best regime in Plato and Aristotle, contrary to what the textbooks say,[4] is not different in itself, in Aristotle as it is in Plato. That the content of the best regime differs in Aristotle[5] [and] Plato is true, but the structure—the place—is the same. And here are all the actual societies [LS writes on the blackboard]. All kinds, better or worse. There is no necessity for the ideal ever becoming actual. It must be possible, but there is no necessity for it to become actual.

This is the starting point of Machiavelli's critique. He simply says: Well, if it is essentially not actual and not bound to be actual, then it is an imaginary commonwealth; and we want to have a commonwealth as our model the actuality of which is assured. And how does one assure it? Answer: by lowering it. If we have one which is not here, but here [LS writes on the blackboard], the chances are much greater. This is exactly what men like Machiavelli and Hobbes and Locke are trying to do—and utilitarianism as well, because the true utilitarian teaching was of course never actualized but it seemed to be so easy to appeal to the utility of the greatest number: you

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Strauss might have meant to say Vico, not Bacon.

[iii] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946).

only have to get a democracy, then the greatest number will get its utility. It's very simple, infinitely more simple than to find this perfect gentlemen of which Plato and Aristotle dreamt. Good. But now there is another, more advanced stage of this thing, and this says of course [that] the ideal is in itself radically different from reality, the ought from the is. Kant is the most famous exponent of this view. But there is an intrinsic necessity of convergence. Or rather this way of talking; here is the idea: men's selfish passions work in such a way that they gradually need actual death. Wars become ever more costly, the world becomes ever more one world. That's already [in] Kant, although you will read it in every daily paper. But this was once a terrific thing, so that men do not have to undergo a moral conversion.[6] The situation changes, the institutions change. For example, when you have nuclear wars, wars cease to be profitable and only a madman would wage war. And this simple cleverness, not to act like an obvious madman, is not—I mean, even Khrushchev has this.[7] You don't need[8] any conversion [for that], any moral conversion.

Now[9] what Kant stated was then done by Hegel in a greatly more sophisticated manner so that the final stage of the historic process, which comes by necessity, is one in which the rational is actual, as Hegel put it, and the actual is rational. And according to Mr. . . . 's suggestion, which we will have to examine, this is already implied in Vico's assertion of the coincidence of the true and the certain. Something like that. But we have to examine it; I am not yet convinced of it.

Now when you quoted this axiom, "The order of ideas is the same as the order of institutions,"[iv] here [there] is a question of translation, because the Italian original uses a much vaguer term than "institutions": *cose*. The order of ideas is identical with the order of things. Now the "things" [in fact] very frequently mean [institutions][10] in Vico[11] [but] that does not do away with this broader meaning. Now[12] do you know where this formula extends from: "The order of ideas is the same as the order of things"? Spinoza. A well-known proposition in the Second Book of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Spinoza plays altogether a very great role for Vico, although the references to him are all polemical. But that is not necessarily decisive. You[13] have to see also [that] Spinoza had a very bad name: no one could quote him. I think the first time that he was spoken of—his character was praised by some people; that was barely permissible because he was not particularly . . . and this was interpreted as a kind of . . . in the eighteenth century [LS laughs]. They must have had a very funny morality. But Spinoza was spoken of with respect for the first time in 1785. He was absolutely in the doghouse—in a way, Hobbes too; but Hobbes was earlier acceptable because Hobbes had taught the absolute monarchy, and this, needless to say, was a teaching acceptable not to the theologians but to the other advisors of absolute kings, for reasons which I don't have to explain.[14] Spinoza was not . . . monarchy. This created some difficulty for him.

Now for the other point which you mentioned: "Man is by nature social." Vico says that. But you saw that Vico doesn't mean the same thing by it which other scholars meant by it. This was . . . again by Spinoza. Spinoza starts from the selfish individual, even more so than Hobbes we could say, and yet by a necessary mechanism man becomes social. And the mechanism in Spinoza (I do not know if they have found any traces of that in Vico yet)—in Spinoza's case it is this way: there is something like that what Hume later on calls "association of ideas," and what Spinoza calls "the imitation of affects." In other words, if I desire A, then of course for this very reason I am a competitor with everyone else who desires A, and no holds barred. But it is also

[iv] Axiom LXIV, paragraph 238, although Strauss changes "must follow" into "is the same as."

possible that my love for A, say, an apple, may by an association of ideas cast a positive light on the other man who likes the apple. Associate, you know: my like, his like. And now this imitation of affects, this association of ideas, assimilates men to each other and therefore brings about a kind of sociality. But there is of course the greatest difference between sociality brought about by a blind mechanism and natural sociality. And this, I believe, is of some importance for the understanding of Vico, although this particular argument I believe does not occur in Vico.

Another point which we should mention where Vico is also . . . to Spinoza and to Hobbes is this. Spinoza's[15] explicit criticism of Hobbes is this: Hobbes had made the famous distinction between the state of nature and the civil state. And this means, then, [that] once man entered societies, the state of nature is out. And Spinoza says: No, the state of nature is never out; it is only modified by the establishment of civil society. It is still the state of nature—i.e., the natural laws which determine man to his actions are the same in the civil state and the state of nature, only modified by the existence of institutions. So in other words, instead of fearing anyone who passes you on the street, which is no longer necessary, you fear the policeman, ultimately the gallows. But this is only a modification of the affects, the passions, not an elimination, you see. And this, I think, is also in Vico.[16] The state of nature, we can say—in this sense the state where man is determined by his natural emotions and so on—remains intact in civil society.

Now let us then turn to . . . argument. How we can manage I do not know because it is a very long and difficult chapter. We may have to carry over from now on until we come to a section which doesn't contain so much theoretically important stuff.

Now let me remind us of one point which I made clear last time. There is a very important stratum of Vico, which, while it may have been stated more coherently, at least at first glance, than it was ever stated before, is in itself in no way novel. And that is the notion of a strictly *critical* history. Critical history: no explanation in terms of marvelous, miraculous events; everything happens naturally. Thucydides is the most famous exponent. And going together with [it is] a view that the beginnings of man were very imperfect. Now this overall schema is not only in Thucydides; we have it also in Plato in the *Laws*, as I mentioned last time, [and] to some extent even in Cicero . . . . But Vico may have stated this more coherently than anyone prior to him. This, however, means it is not an essential change and we are of course concerned primarily with the essential changes.

Now at the beginning of this section on the Elements, paragraph 119, Vico states what the theme is. He looks for those axioms which will give form to the matter supplied by history. That was the question we discussed last time. I think Mr. Butterworth brought that up. How does he[17] [arrive at] the criterion for distinguishing between true fables and untrue fables, i.e. fables which have some historical sense and those which don't have it? Now what is first? Let us read paragraph 120.

Mr. Reinken: "Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance, man makes himself the measure of all things." (120)

LS: The rule of the universe. So this we have already seen before in paragraphs 48 and 50, but [here] it takes on[18] a higher status because it is now explicitly made the first axiom. He is here

silent about the more specific reason, the link between the indefinite nature—the infinite nature of the human mind[19] [and] making itself the rule of the universe. That link is, as we[20] [saw] last time, fear. The unknown is aggrandized, made bigger than it is, i.e. within a way supposed to be known. If I say the cause of this earthquake, or whatever it may be, was some god, then while I do not know it, I[21] [assign] to it a higher cause than it has, I mean the merely natural cause. Fear is, then, the decisive link. Now fear, as we all know, is a passion. It has to do not so much with man's intellectual life, cognitive life, as with the life of the spirit. Now in other words, a certain kind of will is the cause of the most fundamental error. Have you ever heard such a thing? I mean, [is there] something of which we are reminded by Vico? Well, one of the most famous theories of error is that of Descartes, and that was very well known to Vico. And Descartes gives this reason for error: man's intellect is finite, but his will is infinite.[v] Regarding his will, man is equal to God, only without His intellect. Therefore, since his will extends infinitely beyond the boundaries of the intellect he can ascend . . . the will to things which he does not know. Now in other words, fear is only a more specific form of will which confuses to error. I have a reference here to paragraph 137 where this—. Well, let us see whether this comes out. Read paragraph 137.

Mr. Reinken: "Men who do not know the truth of things try to reach certainty about them, so that, if they cannot satisfy their intellects by science, their wills at least may rest on conscience."[vi] (137)

LS: You see, this has to do with the will in contradistinction to the intellect. This is also underlying the distinction between the true and the certain to which we will come later. Yes.

There is so much here, but we must be a bit choosy. At the end of paragraph 123 he speaks of the natural beginning of humanity. Natural. Therefore man had to be, by *nature*, small, rude, and—at the beginning, at least—small, rude, and most obscure. He proceeds in a somewhat strange way. He begins simply. And then later on, in paragraph 163, he gives . . . so we have first to work very hard for ourselves and then we are rewarded or punished, as the case may be, by his authentic presentation of what the structure of the argument is. But even without that we can see that up to paragraph 128 he deals with error.[22] Error precedes truth; that is the idea. We begin with error. And then in paragraph 129, as indicated by the first word, up through paragraph 133, he deals with philosophy. Philosophy, the pursuit of replacing error by truth. Now Vico admits here the need of philosophy. Sure. If he wants to have a new science—and science and philosophy were not so distinguished as they are now—it is obvious. But, and this is the key point, philosophy must be political, not monastic, i.e. not a guidance for the individual as individual. The argument can be stated as follows: The philosophers cannot be political. Paragraph 131 I think we can read.

Mr. Reinken: "Philosophy considers man as he should be—"

LS: As he ought to be.

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[v] See Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the Fourth Meditation.

[vi] The reader's most important change here is the substitution of "conscience" for "consciousness," which is used in the class text. The Italian word is *coscienza*, which admits of both interpretations. Strauss defends "conscience" in what follows.

Mr. Reinken: "And so can be of service to but very few, who wish to live in the Republic of Plato, not to fall back into the dregs of Romulus." (131)

LS: The latter is a phrase coined by Cicero, but the thought is the first chapter of Spinoza's *Political Treatise*, an elaborate commentary on the thought. This means that philosophers cannot be political because their way of life is the preserve of a tiny minority. Philosophy teaches how one ought to live only to very few, i.e. philosophy is essentially monastic, in his sense of the word, a hermit's way of life. But philosophy requires a political supplement, because philosophy must say something about how the non-philosophers must live. Philosophy, being universal wisdom, must speak about that too. Now this political supplement to philosophy is[23] [derived] from the teaching of the legislators, because they are the fellows who have taken care throughout the ages of making life bearable for the non-philosophers, of course. Again, Spinoza, chapter 1. The politicians, as he puts it, [are] very shrewd fellows—you know, very astute fellows. They knew how to manage the multitude; and what the philosopher must do is simply to see what these politicians have devised and then deduce these devices from human nature, which the legislators of course did not do: they played by ear and they discovered it by sheer experience. The philosopher will give the reasons but he will not discover, as it were, new devices. That is part of what Mr. Emmert said, but it is not quite the same for the very simple reason that Spinoza still presents, believe it or not, a normative political teaching: i.e., by looking at these devices and deducing from human nature, he sees that not all these devices are good. I mean that you can combine them in a different way than they were ever combined by any legislator, and therefore Spinoza has this special teaching, the *optima forma rei publicae*, the best form of the commonwealth.

The characteristic thing of Vico is that he seems to be even less normative than Spinoza, that his new science and this new political philosophy are apparently purely theoretical. They look at what has been done by men, legislators throughout the ages. Whether this is true, of course we do not know. We can also state it as follows: philosophy deals—apart from its other subjects—philosophy concerned with man deals with the philosophic life and with the life of the vulgar. That would be the older distinction. And the latter is of course political philosophy proper. Now [in] the life of the vulgar, if we follow the Platonic distinction, are the human virtues—human in the sense of human origin; and the others, the divine virtues. But what are the human virtues in the sense of the older human virtues? Aren't they the socially useful vices? Those vices which contribute to social life. Whereas the other vices of course have to be fought. So this is, I believe, the connection between these two parts. Paragraph 133.

Mr. Reinken: "This axiom proves that there is divine providence and further that it is a divine legislative mind. For out of the passions of men each bent on his private advantage, for the sake of which they would live like wild beasts in the wilderness, it has made the civil orders by which they may live in human society." (133)

LS: In other words, what we have seen already before, but which we must truly keep in mind: Private, strictly selfish vices or passions lead to civil felicity. This proves providence. What does it make clear in the next paragraph? Please read it.

Mr. Reinken: "Things do not settle or endure out of their natural order." (134)

LS: Which implies [that] this process whereby the strictly selfish passions lead to civil felicity is a strictly natural process. And it proves by its naturalness divine providence.

Now man, in the next paragraph (we cannot read everything), man is by nature social. That's to say that his asocial or antisocial passions make him social through a natural necessity. Hence there is natural right, right being something relating to an order of society. And if society is natural there will be a natural right. This is Vico's conception of natural right.[24] In a way he accepts [the] Aristotelian teaching, but he radically interprets it because he radically interprets man's sociality. Because man's natural sociality is passion . . . or produced by a mechanism, the natural right must be different from Aristotle's natural right. Paragraph 137. Yes, here he makes this distinction between the true and the certain. Now let me put this on the blackboard so we keep[25] in mind that the problem which we have . . . [LS writes on the blackboard]. Here is philosophy, the truth. Here is non-philosophy, however we may . . . it, later, which leads to the certain. And this has to do with the intellect, and this has to do with the will. This is, I think, all. It is very interesting that he calls [it] the certain. I mean, if people speak of the truth, it's truth not to the intellect. And what do they traditionally say[26] belongs to the will, as distinguished from the true? The . . . and the . . . . And what belongs to the will?

Student: Opinion?

LS: No, no, no, no. *Bonum*. The *bonum*, the good.[27] That is only another statement of the formula. Why does Vico replace the good by the certain? Because this is surely very strange. Now let us see. Let us read first the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true—"

LS: "Science" of the true.

Mr. Reinken: "science of the true; philology observes the authority of human choice[vii], whence comes consciousness of the certain." (138)

LS: Yes, *coscienza*, which means also conscience. That is not true? So this ambiguity we must keep in mind. That science and conscience are different things, we all understand. Now by philosophy and philology are [meant] what we would call—we today would say that philosophy deals with the reason, contemplates reason, and philology observes facts. But Vico does not say "facts." He says it observes the authority of human arbitrament. Now what does he mean by that? Now first we can say that certain . . . is the fact, without reasons. I mean, that we find a corpse and a wound, a shot wound?

Mr. Reinken: A bullet wound.

[vii] Mr. Reinken substitutes "the authority of human choice" for "that of which human choice is the author."

LS: A bullet wound. So we know[28] [it] was either suicide or murder, that's clear. This is fact, and we don't doubt of the fact for one moment. Certain. But we are dissatisfied with the situation because we do not know who did it. And this would be the cause or the reason. You understand that. Now these crude facts, the understood facts, are here somehow identified with authority. Does this make sense? I mean of course not this planned act of the killed man—but how can a man come to use fact, crude fact, synonymously with authority? What does authority do? I mean mere authority as authority.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but there is a nice word which is used up to the present day even in social science texts: the fiat of the legislator. *Sit factum*. So in other words, the merely authoritative does have the character of the mere crude fact. This is, I think, the link between these two. This authoritative decision can only be taken cognizance of, it can only be observed. But philosophy can't leave it at that, just as little as in the case of the corpse here: Not here, here! I mean, I say this as to our superstitions that regarded it as a bad omen. The philosophers have to explain that, have to explain this decision. The formula is laid down that a man may have four, but not more than four, wives unless he's a king. There is some law, I believe, that says that. This is a fact. Why did that legislator arrange it this way? That goes beyond what the lawyer of that law could solve. That would be a philosophic question. So we see here one distinction which I believe is very important, regardless of whether Vico meant it or not. I believe he meant it, but I don't know. "Certainty" is here an ambiguous term, namely, in the first place, this certainty of the fact of the observer who sees this strange law, and which certainty is transformed into truth by understanding the reason. Then it is not merely the certainty of fact, but then it is understood as truth.

But there is another aspect of that certainty, and that is of the people subject to the law. Not the observers, not the philosophers.[29][The people subject to the law] become certain, subjectively certain as Hegel called it, that this is the right thing to do. Their doubt—if they had been capable of doubt—their doubt [concerning] how shall we act in this matter has been settled by the fiat of the legislator. They have been made certain. And this explains why here he refers to the conscience. This conscience does not enter as far as the mere observer and the scientific or philosophic explainer is concerned but is, of course, crucial for the people subject to the law. I think we must keep this distinction in mind because it may very well be important for the sequel, if only[30] because Vico should not have reflected on it, which I doubt.

Let us first raise this question: How can there be certainty of the people in question[s] regarding things which depend on arbitrary decisions? The legislator decides: four wives and no more. Now of course people may simply be afraid of punishment, but as long as there is mere fear there is of course no certainty . . . . How can they have certainty regarding things which depend entirely on arbitrary decisions? Paragraph 141.

Mr. Reinken: "Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain and determined by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities, which are the two origins of the natural law of nations." (141)

LS: Of the right order. Right, not wrong. All right. This is a very important source of the term common sense, which . . . . "Common sense" stems in one sense from Aristotle's *De Anima*. It is the sense in which the various senses are united. For example, if I can say: "This is hot and well tasting," that I cannot know merely by touch and taste. There must be some union of the five senses somewhere; that's the "common sense" of Aristotle.[31] The origin of the term is, as far as I know, [in] Cicero. Something to check[32], Mr. Nicgorski. And it is a kind of equivalent to what Aristotle calls "prudence," a common sense of the right and decent. I also[33] know[34] that around 1700 the word "common sense" comes into vogue, which it never had [been] before, thanks to Shaftesbury, a famous British writer.[viii] Shaftesbury. And the late Aronson,[ix] who died much [too] young, wanted to study that. Someone else should take up this study which has the advantage that one doesn't have to know any language except English to study Shaftesbury, although Cicero is, of course, unfortunately not an English writer. Good. Now Shaftesbury was in Naples around 1700, and[35] [it] seems to be a fact that there was some influence of Vico on what later came to be called the Scotch school of common sense[36] [deriving] from Shaftesbury. So this is of some historical importance. I mention this only in passing.

We will turn the . . . . There is a common sense of man regarding what is necessary or useful to man. (Let me first finish this. One moment.) And this leads to the natural right of the gentiles because there is a common sense, an agreement among all men, and this is the source or the root of the certainty which peoples have all over the world regarding the rightness of their customs. Yes?

Student: I wonder if there's any relation between this making certain and Descartes' theory.

LS: For Descartes, one can say that the certain is identical with the true, and not distinguished from the true.

Student: Well . . . the fundamental hypotheses of natural science might prove to be arbitrary.

LS: Yes, that appears [so] now or, say, [in the] late nineteenth century, but in Descartes' time the laws of nature were of course not arbitrary. The laws of nature were not hypothetical; they were unhypothetical, certain or true. For Descartes, the true or the certain is the clear and distinct idea. You know that. And there is a great difficulty regarding this point, but Descartes does not recognize as certain something[37] different from the true, in the way in which Vico does. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: . . . .

LS: They are by no means clear. Naturally. We are only at the beginning. We get only gradually clearer formulations of the problem. And perhaps after we have reached the clearest and fullest statement of the problem, we [will] have the solution. But for the time being we surely don't have that.

[viii] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1670-1713).

[ix] See Jason Aronson, "Critical Note: Shaftesbury on Locke," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 1101-04.

Let me restate the results of these remarks here, especially of paragraph 141 and 142. A natural necessity is effective in early men and makes them therefore certain of these most elementary institutions which they adopted, the matrimony, or paternal authority, or whatever it may be.

Let us turn to paragraph 144.

Mr. Reinken: "Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other must have a common ground of truth." (144)

LS: Of "truth," not merely of certainty. Ideas common to nations ignorant of each other must have an element of truth, i.e. they show to the philologist or philosopher the way to true origins. That's something entirely different. Here we are not now concerned[38] with what these people were certain of, but we only find out what happened there, and as such we are concerned not with the certain, but with the true.

Paragraph 145.

Mr. Reinken: "This axiom is a great principle which establishes the common sense of the human race as the criterion taught to the nations by divine providence to define what is certain in the natural right[x] of nations." (145)

LS: You see, here he speaks again of the certain. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And the nations reach this certainty by recognizing the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among them all in respect of this right. Thence issues the mental dictionary for assigning origins to all the diverse articulated languages."

LS: And so on. Let us stop here for one moment. The certainty of the natural right of nations, due to the common sense, is very questionable. The certainty as distinguished from the truth. One reason is given in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> This same axiom does away with all the ideas hitherto held concerning the natural right of the nations, which has been thought to have originated in one nation and to have been received from it by others. This error was encouraged by the bad example of the Egyptians and Greeks in vainly boasting that they had spread civilization throughout the world. It was this error that gave rise to the fiction that the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from Greece. (146)

LS: We will hear of that *ad nauseam*. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken:

> If that had been the case, it would have been a civil law communicated to other peoples by human provision, and not a law which divine providence ordained

[x] The text reads "the natural law of the gentes." Mr. Reinken generally follows LS's translation of *dritto* as "right" and *genti* as "nations" (though he did not so render *dritto* in 141 on the previous page).

> naturally in all nations along with human customs themselves. Indeed, it will be one of our constant labors throughout this book to demonstrate that the natural right of nations originated separately among the several peoples, each in ignorance of the others, and that subsequently, as a result of wars, embassies, alliances, and commerce, it came to be recognized as common to the entire race. (146)

LS: In other words, if I understand it correctly,[39] it is the essence of the natural right as natural to emerge in each nation independently of any knowledge of other nations. But I think what he means by this[40] [is that] therefore there cannot be general certainty regarding natural right of the people themselves because they do not know of these others. In other words, only the observer-philologist-philosopher can recognize it as natural. The people themselves could not know it was natural; it was simply handed down from their ancestors.

Now, paragraph 147.

Mr. Reinken: "The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being—"

LS: Here it is translated as "things," *cose*. He should always translate it this way. Yes? "The nature of things."

Mr. Reinken: "at certain times and in certain fashions. Whenever the time and fashion is thus and so, such and not otherwise are the things that come into being." (147)

LS: Yes. What does this mean? The nature of a thing is how that thing was in its origin, because that origin explains any later stage. Does he mean that? The acorn explains the oak. Does he mean that? It is not necessary to have ever seen an oak, but if you have a complete knowledge of the acorn, microscopic and otherwise, you would know that it can become an oak and only an oak. If he means that, that's very brave, because matrimony, as he has already alluded, will be explained as due to superstitious fear. Monogamy. Is then this superstitious origin of matrimony the reason for the sacredness of matrimony? That would be the great implication if the origin gives the thing its character in the way in which it does. The alternative would be that whatever people in the early stage may have thought about an institution they formed, there may be something effective in that of which they were unaware and which was the true reason. Is this intelligible? I mean, whatever went on in the heads of very savage and primitive peoples when they established an institution, this would not necessarily be the true reason unknown to them but effective in what they did. But if what was in their heads at that time was *the reason*, then of course if this reason, being very weak and poor, is dissolved, the whole institution proves to be baseless. I don't remember that. Freud gives a very strange explanation of the early band of men. They had only one woman and then the brothers killed the father. Has any one of you read that? I read it once. It sounds very implausible to me. Now you must know such . . . .

At any rate, where does this lead to? Where does it lead to? I forgot that—. But it is ultimately, you know, an event which took place—well, of course it never took place, for it was only postulated. It was believed to have taken place on the basis of all kinds of fantastic assumptions. Its use for understanding present day institutions and the validity and soundness of these

institutions is supposed to depend still on these savage reasons.[41] [It] is not yet clear whether Vico means it in this way, but there is a certain suspicion that he might mean that.

Student: If he thinks in this way, is he in contradiction with the theory of pure origins?

LS: With?

Student: With the thesis of pure origins.

LS: The origins are now obscure, but once he applies this engine of the new science, they will no longer be obscure.[42] Obscurity is removed by the new science, so that is why this is not right. Let us see, 153.

Mr. Reinken: "This axiom assures us that the weightiest philological proofs of the natural right of nations (in the understanding of which the Romans were unquestionably pre-eminent) can be drawn from Latin speech. For the same reason scholars of the German language can do the like, since it retains this same property possessed by the ancient Roman language." (153)

LS: Namely, to be a mother language like Greek and Latin but not like French, and Spanish, Italian and, to some extent, English. You see, an implication of course is this: not all languages go through the normal growth that Greek did. And if not all languages, then it means also not all people. This is of great importance regarding the eternal, universal history. It is not universally valid as we shall see more and more. In paragraph 158, for example, we hear of the peculiarity of the Greeks. The Greeks are *the* nation of philosophers; we have spoken about this subject before.

159, a very long paragraph. I [will] state the main point. In France you have a coincidence of scholastic theology and heroic fables, the medieval stories of children. That is to say, heroic fables belong to the heroic age. Scholastic theology belongs to the later age. But in France it happened to be [that] these two things belonging to two different ages happened to take place in the same age. We'll see how little eternal the eternal history is.

In paragraph 160 he speaks of the peculiarity of Rome.[43] I mean what distinguishes them from other nations. Perhaps you [should] read that.

Mr. Reinken: "But as we further meditated this work we came upon another cause for the effect in question, and this cause is perhaps more apposite. Romulus founded Rome in the midst of other more ancient cities of Latium, and founded it by opening there the asylum which Livy defines generally as 'an old counsel of founders of cities'—"

LS: Also one of the [passages] eternally requoted[44] by Vico.

Mr. Reinken:

> for since violence still reigned he naturally established the city of Rome on the same basis on which the oldest cities of the world had been founded. And so it came about, since Roman customs were developing from such beginnings at a time when the vulgar tongues of Latium were already well advanced, that Roman civil affairs, the like of which the Greeks had set forth in heroic speech, were set forth by the Romans in vulgar speech.

> Thus ancient Roman history will be found to be a continuous mythology of the heroic history of the Greeks. (160)

LS: Do you see, in other words, there is never or very rarely a simple uniformity in the development of nations? The difference between Rome and Greece here. Paragraph 163 is very long. But let us read the beginning at least.

Mr. Reinken: "Of all the aforesaid propositions, the first, second, third and fourth give us the basis for refuting all opinions hitherto held about the beginnings[xi] of humanity. The refutations turn on the improbabilities, absurdities, contradictions and impossibilities of these opinions."

LS: Mr. Butterworth, your question of last time is clearly answered now, isn't it?[45] About the criterion. I mean whether the axioms are true or false is not our question, but he has faced your question, yes? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "The subsequent propositions, from the fifth to the fifteenth, which give us the basis of truth, will serve for considering this world of nations in its eternal idea, by that property of every science, noted by Aristotle, that 'science has to do with what is universal and eternal.'[xii] The last propositions, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second, will give us the basis of certitude."

LS: Of the certain. In contradistinction to the truth. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "By their use we shall be able to see in fact this world of nations which we have studied in idea, following the method of philosophizing made most certain by Francis Bacon, Lord of Verulam, but carrying it over from the things[xiii] of nature, on which he composed his book *Cogitata* [*et*] *visa*, to the civil affairs of mankind." (163)

LS: Now this last was the passage referred to by Mr. . . . in his paper. You see here the ideal history of this world of nations is something different from the factual world of the nations. It's certain. We have had so many examples of that. You know the peculiarities in the development of the various nations,[46] we do not have to dwell on that. Here "ideal" takes on the meaning of the constructed—not the Platonic meaning, but the modern meaning of the "ideal" of constructed. And in other words, we make a construction on the basis of what we know in general of human nature. And then we look like modern scientists having a primary theory or hypothesis; [we] apply them to the facts and modify them. So that the eternal ideal history is more hypothetical than strictly speaking true. Someone wanted to raise a question? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: This is a question about an axiom that we skipped by. Paragraph number 157, in which he says . . . . And it seems that when you ask why he said that, that he therefore implies that all the preceding axioms are demonstrations of what he said before. And I question that.

[xi] The translation reads "principles"; the Italian is *principi*.

[xii] The text includes Latin quotation after the English: "(*scientia debet esse de universalibus et aeternis*)." As stated in the Editorial Headnote, we will not note all of Mr. Reinken's omissions of this sort.

[xiii] Following Strauss, Mr. Reinken translates *cose* as "things," not "institutions."

LS: In other words, if I understand you correctly, what I said seems to be contradicted by the fact that he calls these "axioms," and which he clearly means in this older language [as] non-hypothetical assertions. Is this what you mean?

Mr. Butterworth: This is—yes.

LS: All right, very well. Then we must make a distinction. What he says about man's beginnings is of course meant to be finally right. It's not hypothetical. But if you come to such a thing like the three ages—age of the gods, age of the heroes, age of men—or the three languages, I asked you a very simple question: Where did he get that from? How did he get these three ages?

Mr. Butterworth: Well, he says it corresponds to what the Egyptians said.

LS: Yes, he got it from the Egyptians. Yes. Well, excuse me. After we have become so enlightened already by *Signor* Vico, what is the value of some notion of these half-barbaric Egyptian priests? In other words, there can very well be a provisional, plausible suggestion which has some value and needs many, many corrections to be true. This does not have the status of the true axioms, like the one[s] about the infinity of the human mind and its proneness to errors of this and this nature.

Mr. Butterworth: Am I being too difficult when I say that it seems one could pose contradictory axioms to those that he has put down and . . . call them axioms?

LS: No; you never could according to him—

Mr. Butterworth: According to him—

LS: That is very simple. He indicates at the beginning of what he says, at the beginning of paragraph 163. He would say: Try it the other way around. Try it by its human perfect beginnings, and that[47] [what] the pagans have is all decayed original, say, Jewish wisdom. You will confound, confuse, by starting from the opposite thesis. The approach is really similar to that of Spinoza . . . .[48] Still, Spinoza begins with axioms in the *Ethics*. The most simple example is the one here. And these axioms are rarely doubtful. Some of them at least, actually are doubtful. And how can he use them? And that appears only much later indirectly. These are to begin with, in Spinoza, mere hypotheses in fact, but hypotheses leading to a clear and distinct account of the whole. The alternative axioms would lead to a confused account of the whole. *Ergo*, that's the proof. Now it may of course be indubitable; maybe a clear account of the whole is not possible. Assuming that. That was the simple objection made already by Arnauld[xiv] to Descartes about the clear and distinct ideas. The clear and distinct idea is not necessarily the true idea. In other words, a part of the idea [LS writes on the blackboard]—if this is an idea, this might be wholly dark, yes? And what Descartes . . . that isn't. Only this is. This is the clear and distinct part . . . . Convenient, but not evidently sound.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes. Well now, if I understand you correctly you agree with that criticism.

[xiv] Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694), a prolific author of works on theology and philosophy.

LS: Which?

Mr. Butterworth: That it is definitely convenient, and yet we don't know whether it is sound.

LS: Yes, sure. It was victorious for quite some time, this patrician schema. And then the difficulties came out more and more, and today they are admitted by the very successors to the heroes of the seventeenth century. They are no longer heroes—there are too many of them to be heroes—but they admit it in their way by saying that the basis is hypothetical of natural science.

Mr. Butterworth: Does this apply with equal validity to Vico?

LS: Equally—?

Mr. Butterworth: With equal validity to Vico?[49]

LS: To the extent to which he follows the Baconian-Cartesian scheme at all, but we must see. But surely you can say his axioms are somewhat more plausible than those with which Spinoza begins. Yes? One can say that. But we must wait. [LS talks over a student trying to interject] In other words, one must wait [to see] whether it is truly an explanation of early man and the earliest institutions to assume that they were practically beasts. That's really a question. Or take the Marxist construction: whether it is really true that what men do in order to satisfy their bodily needs (in these early stages especially) is prior to the thoughts they have about the whole. Why should not man, in the same moment, so to speak, have been concerned with living—production—and with some form of wondering about the whole? Why shouldn't he? It's a mere dogmatic assertion of Marx. And similar things apply to Freud, of course. In other words, things will [be]come very clear: you can have clarity, as it were, for the asking. Exclude 70 percent, 50 percent of the facts, and life is much easier. [Laughter] But there is a kind of revenge for this, you know? Yes? We see also that Vico does not reject Bacon's method; he merely transferred it to civil things as they were applied to natural things. Paragraph 165, again read it.

Mr. Reinken: "Sacred history is more ancient than all the most ancient profane histories that have come done to us, for it narrates in great detail and over a period of more than 800 years the state of nature under the patriarchs; that is, the state of the families, out of which, by general agreement of political theorists, the peoples and cities later arose. Of this family state profane history has told us nothing or little, and that little quite confused." (165)

LS: Yes, would this not be a good reason then to limit ourselves to the study *Genesis*, because that's the only clear account we have of the state of nature? Of course the usage is[50] orthodox here, if I remember correctly. The state prior to the law is a state of nature, isn't it? I mean, whether corrupt or fallen is another matter, but this is a state of nature. And so the state of nature ceases according to the Christian doctrine with the legislation, the Mosaic legislation. Now I figured[51] out [that] from the Flood to the legislation at Sinai is about 800 years: here he does not contradict himself. So, good.[52] I can only say if I were to accept this thesis of Vico, I would never have written the *New Science*; I would have given an interpretation of the story of the

Patriarchs in *Genesis*, and because here we have according to his premise clarity and certainty, and why engage in all kinds of speculations? Why . . . . paragraph—yes?

Mr. Reinken: It is interesting that there's a single particular cited amid all the general axioms—the ones Mr. Butterworth grazed over—there is only one proper name, one event referred to. He's going to go to Homer, perhaps for reasons that the Inquisition is active in Naples.

LS: In other words, that—as it were, his analysis of Homer is a substitute for his analysis of the Old Testament.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Maybe, but we have not yet, well—

Mr. Reinken: Well, I think the possibility—

LS: Yes. Yes, well, for our clarity[53]—I mean whatever excuses he might have had to write in such a strange way. But for our clarity [it] is important to know that, to see that maybe he doesn't mean such things as paragraph 165 quite seriously. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Well, further hope for a few cross-references from Homer to sacred history, when we come to it.

LS: Yes, if we come to that. Now paragraph 175, how to explain the gods, because according to that scheme the first age—and everything depends on the explanation of the first age, because that's the beginning of civilization, the birth of civilization. How to explain the gods, i.e. we must understand the needs of early men as early men understood these needs. This is the condition of the whole thing. Now all (paragraph 176), all civilization begins with religion. Yes. We may add: either true or false—true in the case of the Jews, false in the case of the gentiles. But the key point: false religions, or superstitions, are not decayed versions of an original pure monotheism, which was a prevalent view.[54] [They're] not. As Spinoza puts it, these superstitions cannot be explained as due to a confused idea of God—confused in contradistinction to clear and distinct, whereas the traditional view was of course [that] it is an outcome of a confused idea of God. But there is no underlying confused[55] idea of God. But this very idea of God or gods emerges here out of certain experiences and must be understood entirely in terms of these experiences as [they were] understood by these early men. Paragraph 177.

Mr. Reinken: "Wherever a people have grown savage in arms, so that human laws have no longer any place among it, the only powerful means of reducing it is religion." (177)

LS: Yes. This is simply a restatement of Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Book 1, chapter 11. (Machiavelli, by the way, is written very large here, on the occasion which I refer to it.) Yes, but what does this simple statement mean? If human laws are sufficient, i.e. if the peoples are civilized, have reached the human stage as distinguished from the divine or heroic stage, do they still need religion? What follows? What do you mean? What does it say? Where the people have

become—I mean where the people do no longer obey human laws, then it is necessary to reduce them to religion; but if they are lawabiding—

Student: Atheist society.

LS: Yes! Yes. When Bayle, Pierre Bayle, a landmark in the history of modern thought [LS writes on the blackboard and repeats Bayle's name while writing], an acquaintance of John Locke, among others—Bayle was[56] as far as I know the first man at any time who said an atheistic society is possible. Now, you know what a terrific history that had afterwards, especially in our age. Pierre Bayle. Bayle's *Thoughts on a Comet*[xv] is the title of the book in which he explains that. Vico knew him, of course—he quotes him. Vico polemicizes against him because—and Vico claims he has refuted Bayle because Vico *proves* that religion is the foundation of all society: early men *must* be religious. [57]The issue that we see now—that civilization could not but have started with religion, i.e. superstition, because in the case of the gentiles there cannot be anything but superstition—does not yet prove that it is a necessity on the highest level of civilization. I do not know where Vico stands, but it is surely a question which we must consider. Yes.

Paragraph 178 can be stated as follows: Divine providence arranged the confused idea of god, i.e. the belief in gods, in order to civilize the peoples. Again a proof of the usefulness or the salutary character of vices, just as superstition is salutary because it has a civilizing effect.

Paragraph 179: polemics against Hobbes. Hobbes did not see this because he did not believe in providence; hence he attributed to Greek philosophy the consideration of man in the whole society of the human race, which it certainly lacked. He made this attribution because he understood Greek philosophy, and hence the origins of mankind, under the spell of Christianity, which teaches universal charity. That's roughly the statement of Vico. What does he mean by that?[58] What fact can we recognize behind this very enigmatic formula? Hobbes' natural right or natural law teaching is a teaching of universal charity, that's correct.[59] How Hobbes understood it is a very complicated question. But[60] this is . . . can easily be proven: read his chapters on natural law. Hobbes' natural law is a teaching of charity and must be, therefore—it is meant to be a philosophic teaching, not based on revelation. Hence it is something Greek, insofar as philosophy stands on the Greeks. In simple English, Hobbes understood early men much too much as rational beings, and this of course was also the criticism of Hobbes by Rousseau, already by Montesquieu.

Here there is also a polemic against Polybius, at the end of this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From this point begins the refutation of the false dictum of Polybius that if the world had philosophers, there would be no need of religions. For if there were in the world no commonwealths, which cannot arise without religions, it would have no philosophers." (179)

LS: Ya. Now Polybius doesn't say this literally but something like that. But of course this does not exclude, again, that once there are philosophers, religions are not needed. I mean, this

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[xv] *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

question remains. But there are so many things of the utmost importance. 183, I believe, makes it very clear—beyond a shadow of doubt—that[61] what he called religion at the origin is superstition. Paragraph 183. You may read it for yourself.

Paragraph 184 and 185: . . . Early men must be understood to be[62] being[s] controlled by nothing but passion and imagination in the medium of ignorance; reason does not enter at all. And since, if this is so, we can of course construe early man, and can know which motives can or cannot have been present, and therefore criticize the fables. That is simple. Then he gives the thought a somewhat different turn in 186, following: early men anthropomorphize everything, i.e. because of their limited knowledge they interpret everything according to men, needs, etc. You can also give it[63] a nicer turn, as he does: early men were sublime poets. But this I think is a very dubious compliment; it means that they are wholly irrational beings. This ambiguity[64] [is present] through[out]. Some of the first gods ([paragraph] 188) were in fact outstanding human beings declared to be gods. Paragraph 190: the cruelty going with superstition, especially the bloody human sacrifice of early religions ([paragraph] 191) [was] due to divine providence for the education of the human race. As it were, God ordered that . . . be worshipped so that men could become gradually civilized. No deception, as the so-called rationalist tradition said, that the lawgivers deceived the people; only self-deception. This is the point which is here crucial. Here he accuses the impious Lucretius, but in fact he subscribes to what Lucretius says, except that Vico himself—let us read this point. Only the quotation from Lucretius. "These things—"

Mr. Reinken: "'So great were the evils religions could prompt'—"

LS: No, read[65] before the quotation from Statius, which precedes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> These things give the right sense to that saying, "Fear first created gods in the world." False religions were born not of imposture but of credulity. Likewise, the unhappy vow and sacrifice that Agamemnon made of his pious daughter Iphigenia—at which Lucretius impiously exclaims, "So great were the evils religion could prompt,"—derive from the counsel of divine providence. For all this was necessary to tame the sons of the cyclopes and reduce them to the humanity of an Aristides, a Socrates, a Laelius and a Scipio Africanus. (191)

LS: Yes. The bloody human sacrifices of early religion are due to human providence—to divine providence. He accuses Lucretius of impiety; in fact he subscribes to what Lucretius says, except that Vico says impiously that human sacrifices were good, whereas Lucretius, more naively, said they are bad—it amounts to that.[66] [These] human sacrifice[s] [are] not, of course, not simply good, but they were absolutely necessary and therefore good because without that there would never have been a Socrates and Aristides. 192, let us read that; it is very important.

Mr. Reinken: "We postulate, and the postulate is reasonable, that for several hundred years, the earth, soaked by the water of the universal flood, sent forth no dry exhalations or matter capable of igniting in the air to produce lightning." (192)

LS: Yes. That's a physical postulate. This proves clearly that Vico's history is not independent of natural science, and he needs it because only in this way can he prove that the first lightning, due to this physical condition, was[67] [a] wholly unexpected event, [and] created a terror to which no present-day terror is comparable, and therefore laid the foundation for superstition. That is (197 [to] 198), the religion underlying civilization is false opinion, yet it is true as civil truth, political truth—meaning we call it necessary for bringing about civilization. In paragraph 204 to 205, I reduce this to the following formula;[68] I don't know whether it [is] helpful for the future. [LS writes on the blackboard] Ideal truths. Factual truths. We must keep this in mind, because this is ideal history. What does ideal mean here? [LS writes on blackboard] Factual truths.[69] Physical truths, including that physics of society which is the New Science. Ideal[70] here is connected with idealization; it is the same as poetic truth and metaphysical truth. This of course is extremely confusing, because it calls poetic truth metaphysical truth. But I must say, the question is: Must this be applied to the ideal history as a whole? In other words, that this is a kind of poetic idealization, the three stages, the three ages. Or[71] does it belong to the factual truth? Paragraph 214: poetry founded gentile humaneness. I ask: What is the relation between poetry and religion? If poetry is understood as poetry it is not the same as religion. Paragraph 218.[72] Men sense first—how do they translate *sentire*?

Mr. Reinken: "Men at first feel—"

LS: Read this short paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Men at first feel without observing. Then they observe with a troubled and agitated spirit. Finally they reflect with a clear mind." (218)

LS: Pure mind, yes. So in other words, primacy of sentiment. These are people—well, the word sentiment becomes important as a philosophic term only in the late eighteenth century, where people tried to change the traditional bipartition of the soul—cognitive and will (affective)—into cognition, will, and sentiment. That is a great event. The distinction which came later into theoretical philosophy, practical modern philosophy, and aesthetics connected with sentiment, which . . . these things which are now taken absolutely for granted are innovations of yesterday. We must never forget—here we have the statement which is very pertinent to that. So sentiment means of course passions and affects here, in the early stage . . . .

In paragraph 219 we find another statement about truth and certainty. [LS writes on the blackboard] This deals with universals, and this has to do with particulars[73]. But here in this stage, non-philosophy is called poetry. And the meaning is this: that [in] early man [it] is impossible to form universals of any interest. I gave the example last time [that] they cannot form the concept "legislator," because they now only have one legislator, naturally—their own—and therefore they call him, say, Hercules or Lycurgus or . . . and when they hear later of others, they say that's the Lycurgus of this other people. And then they get . . . Lycurguses and have to combine them . . . that's one of his canons of mythology. Poetry is radically non-rational and therefore very early. Now what about the non-rationality of poetry? Is this a[74] Vichian innovation?

Student: The *Laws* X, Book X.

LS: The *Laws?*

Student: The diatribe against the poets.

LS: You mean *Republic*, Book X.

Student: Yes, sorry.

LS: Yes, I see, one can say—very good. But more simply: the *Ion*. The *Ion*. The poets are merely inspired; there's no mind of their own. Also in the *Apology of Socrates*. So this has an old origin. Paragraph 221: The original Greek view of the gods was . . . later they invented the indecent meanings of their fables in order to bring them into harmony with their corrupt customs. We have seen this already in paragraph 80, 81. But here of course is the great question:[75] How is this original, relatively high morality possible? You know? I mean, how can there be a Platonic severity in these hard beasts generated by . . . that's the question. Paragraph 222.

Mr. Reinken: "That is a golden passage of Eusebius (from his account of the wisdom of the Egyptians, as exalted above that of all other gentiles) in which he says: 'The first theology of the Egyptians was simply a history interspersed with fables to which later generations, growing ashamed of them, gradually attached mystical interpretations.'" (222)

LS: Yes, in other words, these old stories were viewed by later generations as shameful, so the later morality is rather more severe than before. Well, I thought when I read the statement in paragraph 80 following, that it would be much more in the spirit of Vico to say that the stories of incest in myth would reflect the so-called historical experiences of his beast-like men, rather than to trace them through corrupt practices of late Romans or late Greeks. This is surely a difficulty. Paragraph 230.[76] A proposition which has had a great effect on later Romanticism: song is older than speech. But Vico means it in a wholly un-Romantic sense, because he uses the example of people who stammer and for whom it is easier to sing—Vico had some experience about that [LS laughs], not of his own—than to speak. Is this true, by the way, as a fact? Is it easier overcoming stammering by singing? I do not know. But at any rate, this—in other words, this singing is not something very grand; it is a very primitive affair.

238 is that sentence taken straight from Spinoza's *Ethics*, Book 2, proposition 7, to which I drew your attention. 241, 242, which we must keep in mind: progress is followed by decline. In other words, Vico is not one of these eighteenth-century thinkers who believes in an infinite or indefinite progress. Paragraph 243, 244 seem to teach the moral superiority of democracy to monarchy. This would be very interesting if this would work throughout the book. The first steps of a civilization—248—were made by the stronger, the future *patri*, patricians. This contradicts the vulgar traditions. [Just as in Plato], the first stage—surely this is quite clear from paragraph 243 following—[77]is that of the Polyphemus, of the Cyclops, the cannibalist—cannibals . . . . 264—it is a pity that we proceed in this way. Let us read 264, that seems to be of special importance.

Mr. Reinken: "These last three axioms, with the preceding twelve, beginning with the seventieth, reveal to us the principles of the commonwealths, born of a great necessity (which we shall later determine) imposed upon the family fathers by the *famuli*; a necessity such that the commonwealths naturally took the aristocratic form. For the fathers united themselves in orders to resist the *famuli* who had rebelled against them—"

LS: *Famuli* means practically the same as "serfs," to make it quite clear.

Mr. Reinken:

> and, once thus united, to satisfy these *famuli* and reduce them to obedience, they conceded to them a sort of rustic fief. The fathers, in turn, found their own sovereign family powers (which can only be understood on the analogy of noble fiefs) subjected to the sovereign civil authority of the ruling orders [in which they were now united]. The chiefs of the orders were called kings. It was their function, as the most courageous, to lead the fathers in [quelling] the revolts of the *famuli*. If such an origin of cities were offered as a hypothesis (which later we find to be the fact), it would command acceptance by its naturalness and simplicity, and for the infinite number of civil effects which depend upon it as their proper cause. In no other way can we understand how civil power emerged from family power, and the public patrimony from private patrimonies, or how the commonwealths had their elements prepared in the form of an order of few to command and a multitude of plebeians to obey them. (264)

LS: You see here the character of the argument: that is, if you do not accept my axioms, you can never get a clear and distinct account; that is an *a posteriori* proof of the axiom. And in a way[78] [it is] also the center of his political doctrine.

Paragraph 273 and 274 are short. "The aristocratic republics."

Mr. Reinken: "The aristocratic republics[xvi] are most cautious about going to war, lest they make warriors of the multitude of plebeians. This axiom is the principle of the justice of the Roman arms up to the Punic Wars." (273, 274)

LS: Yes. The words are not quite Machiavellian, [but] the thought is straight out of Machiavelli or, for that matter, out of Thucydides: the Spartans were decent,[79] they didn't start wars easily, they're peace-loving because they had such a great problem with their Helots at home that it was not healthy for them to go to war. Yes. This is the same kind of argument. Strict reason of state. Yes?

Student: Isn't there also this element of . . . once the people become soldiers, then they become—they get a voice in the government by being soldiers.

LS: Yes, sure. That's what he says. And the patricians had to figure out what is wiser: not to wage war, or to give the plebs a cut in the commonwealth.

[xvi] In Bergin and Fisch translation: "aristocratic commonwealths"

Student: . . . more that you wouldn't want to give them an idea of how to use weapons or they'll—

LS: Yes, sure. Yes but the Spartans, of course, had another device: they were very practical men.[80] In [the] case of a tough situation they armed the Helots; they fought for them and fought well, it seems, and then[81] [the Spartans] made them disappear, meaning they killed them off. They had a special institution comparable to secret police in our age called the Krypteia, which acted on strictly secret orders and striking only by night, so no one knew anything. But of course the rest of Greece [LS laughs] knew what happened, and so they never knew which Spartan had killed which Helot. But this doesn't do any harm for certain people, as you see from Mr. . . . 's disclosures [laughter], because it must be brought home before a court of law, you know? Yes?

Different Student: I wanted to ask about paragraph 218. Are these three kinds of minds equated—[82]

LS: Yes?

Student: Do these characteristics describe the mind of man . . . .

LS: No, they're stages. You can[83] say that these are the three stages, of gods, the heroes, and the human beings.

Student: . . . what in the heroic stage—

LS: The second.

Student: The second . . . . the men of that time to observe a troubled and agitated spirit, perhaps this is . . . .

LS: As Vico understands them.[84] I must say, I didn't think of coordinating this triad with the triad of ages, but I believe we must. To that extent you are right. I mean, if—well, Vico's view of the heroes is not very heroic, if I may say so. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: It comports with Homer's.

LS: Yes, in a very . . . sense there is something similar. But Vico was blissfully unaware of that. We will see that when we come to his interpretation of Homer. The following things—in 278 to 281—this is all straight out of Machiavelli. 283, let us read that, just to get another idea of this strand in Vico's thought.

Mr. Reinken: "The weak want laws, the powerful withhold them; the ambitious, in order to win a following, advocate them; princes, in order to equalize the strong with the weak, protect them."

LS: Yes.[85] I would not confuse the order of rank in the word, I would say, straight from . . . . [Laughter] But [it] is better to say straight from Machiavelli, or from the Melian dialogue in Thucydides, for that matter. I mean this . . . that was the greatest surprise for me in

reading Vico after what I had heard about him in the course of my long life,[86] how[87] much simple Machiavellianism there is in Vico. I was not prepared for that. Paragraphs 290, 291 in conjunction with the preceding paragraph's thesis: endangered popular liberty going together with wars of conquest; whether it's the only condition[88] [in which] the patricians will give power to the plebs, [it] is perhaps the best you can have. That was of course Machiavelli's suggestion. Let us read—yes, here in 292 there is an important statement about natural *law*, not merely natural right. Let us read that paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> At first men desire to be free of subjection and attain equality; witness the plebs in the aristocratic republics, which finally turn popular. Then they attempt to surpass their equals; witness the plebs in the popular republics, later corrupted into the republics of the powerful. Finally, they wish to put themselves above the laws; witness the anarchies, or unlimited popular republics, than which there is no greater tyranny; for in them there are as many tyrants as there are bold and dissolute men in the cities. At this juncture the plebs, warned by the ills they suffer, and casting about for a remedy, seek shelter under monarchies. This is the natural royal law by which Tacitus legitimizes the Roman monarchy under Augustus, "who, when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of Prince." (292)

LS: Yes. That's at the beginning of Tacitus's *Annals*. Now here, what does . . . whether historically true or false doesn't matter; the law by which the power—absolute power— was given by the people of Rome to Augustus, the legal basis of the Roman empire. But this is not the law which Vico has in mind; he speaks of a *natural* regal law. Now what is meaning of that? What is the purpose of that *natural* regal law? If the anarchy is . . . permanence, there is no way out except absolute monarchy. That's natural. In what sense is it a law?—of course not man-made, it's natural. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, it has—well, in other words, the law which it contains—because after all society might completely disintegrate, as an alternative. There's still an element of . . . . Either you wish society to go into pieces altogether or you have to establish . . . . This is the natural law in Vico, an example of a natural law in Vico. Paragraph 293 and -94.

Mr. Reinken:

> When the first cities were established on the basis of the families, the nobles, by reason of their native lawless liberty, were opposed to checks and burdens; witness the aristocratic republics in which the nobles are lords. Later they are forced by the plebs, greatly increased in numbers and trained in war, to submit to laws and burdens equally with their plebeians; witness the nobles in the popular republics. Finally, in order to preserve their comfortable existence, they are naturally inclined to accept the supremacy of one ruler; witness the nobles under the monarchies.[xvii] These two axioms, with the others preceding, from the sixty-

[xvii] End of paragraph 293, beginning of paragraph 294.

> sixth on, are the principles of the ideal, eternal history above referred to. (293-294)

LS: On the basis of what we just read in paragraph 292, I would say this: the ideal eternal history is a totality of natural laws, that's natural regal law, regarding the course of political life and each of its stages. It is somewhat more precise . . . . There are always natural laws: a natural law for the beginning, by virtue of which these beast-like fellows, or some beast-like fellows unite into an early commonwealth; and [for] the structure of this commonwealth, and so on and so on. This is the eternal ideal history.

Student: Could you repeat that . . . .

LS: The ideal, eternal history is the totality of natural laws, in the sense of the natural regal laws spoken of before, regarding the course of political life, and each of its stages. In other words, this notion haunting modern social science from roughly Vico's time up to the present day, to have laws of behavior, universal laws of behavior, is fully present. Paragraph 295 to 296 are also of some importance. I think we will stop immediately afterward and discuss the rest with your permission next time because . . . . So let us read the next two paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken: "Let it be granted, as a postulate not repugnant to reason, that after the flood men lived first on the mountains, somewhat later came down to the plains, and finally after long ages dared to approach the shores of the sea." (295)

LS: This is literally taken from Book III of *The Laws*. But we shall see immediately that Vico never had read it, and that . . . . But this is not an objection to Vico. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> In Strabo, there is a golden passage of Plato saying that after the local Ogygian and Deucalionian floods, men dwelt in caves and mountains; and he identifies these first men with the cyclopes, in whom elsewhere he recognizes the first family fathers of the world. Later they dwelt on the mountainsides, and he sees them represented by Dardanus, the builder of Pergamum, which later became the citadel of Troy. Finally, they came down to the plains; this he sees represented by Ilus, by whom Troy was moved onto the plain near the sea, and from whom it took the name of Ilium. (296)

LS: This is only a sign that Vico, although he didn't know Plato, *Laws* III, he knew the most important thing for him via Strabo. That doesn't do away with the fact that it is fundamentally a Platonic teaching. But what is the difference between Plato, *Laws* III, and the Vichian statements here? It is simple: in Plato, this brief history of early societies belongs to a normative context: it is made in order to find the true principles of legislation and then to teach what the best laws are. And there is no such normative context in Vico. This is surely connected with the fact that in Plato[89] there are no natural laws in Vico's sense. Yes?

Student: The same thing is true . . . particular passages in Aristotle's *Politics*. We assume that Aristotle is talking about, describing . . . but then Aristotle is talking about . . . .

LS: Yes, well, but the [question] I would[90] [ask] is: Is there a normative context, you know? I mean, the problem is this: What do the social scientists do? I mean,[91] they claim to or hope to establish laws of nature, laws of human conduct. This is a strictly theoretical enterprise, as much as what astronomers, mineralogists, [and] geneticists do, or economists, for that matter. But this is strictly theoretical. But it is meant to be helpful for practice; that's the point. But in itself it is clearly theoretical. Now[92] whether Vico wants to be helpful for practice, we have not yet found a trace of that. But it is surely meant to be as purely theoretical as present-day social science is meant to be purely theoretical. And this is connected with the change in the meaning of natural law. Natural law—I mean, the word doesn't occur in Plato, or hardly—nor in Aristotle; but it would make some sense to impute it to Plato and Aristotle. It surely occurs in Thomas Aquinas, and with the meaning of a normative law. Even the natural laws[93] which inanimate beings and plants and animals and beasts follow are normative laws according to the Aristotelian or mystic view. From now on all natural laws become non-normative. That's the great change.

Let me state one more thing about this problem which we didn't ever keep in mind,[94] [but which we should] never lose sight of.[95] I advise you very much to read in Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Everyman's Library edition, which is the most easily accessible, volume 1, page 150[96]) a definition of natural law which is based on the older view. And read that, and compare it if you have access to that with the definition of law given in Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 4, on the first page. When you read these two passages together, you learn more than if you read volumes of histories, because you see with your own eyes the change. We may take up these passages in class if we have the time for that; I did that in other classes. Well, I'm now simply too tired; it's a bit late and it's very hot. We will take this up again. To repeat, the difference between a teleological law, which is[97] in one sense not universally valid, i.e. not all beings achieve their end—not all men are born with five fingers, some have only four, and all kinds of other things. There can be defects, and these defects do not do away with the universality of the end, because as defects they point to the completion. The modern universal law, modern natural law is meant to be strictly universally valid regarding each individual—for example, foreign or heavy bodies, or[98] these laws they speak of in economics[99] [regarding] supply or demand, or what have you, they are meant to be universally valid in another sense. Well, I think I should have the two texts in front of me and[100] [read] them to you; and I will do that next time, then we will discuss it.

Now Vico's natural laws are the modern natural laws; and I think his eternal history is the totality of the natural laws regarding human society. And one cannot understand what is going on now in social science, one does not know that because the notion was [that] these old natural laws, because of their lacking universality, are no good: let us have laws which are truly universally valid, and then we [will] have the real pure gold of truth. And the result was that you never got such laws. You know, in political science we know that when you read the few writers who dare to say that they have discovered a universal law of politics, most of them are—say, that we want to find a law valid for American voters' behavior between 1955 and '57 [laughter]—that's . . . . But a truly universal law—there was the famous case of Michels, the Iron Law of

Oligarchy.[xviii] You can say that but then you read about, for example, about absolute monarchy, and how things work there and you see it isn't true. If the monarch was not a lazy and stupid fellow he really . . . . And the oligarchy consisting of his mistress or mistresses and other courtiers did not . . . so you know it was truly monarchy. And there are also truly democracies, if the people really are not lazy, which is more difficult, I believe, than a non-lazy monarch . . . Michels' argument there is a certain plausibility that because of the structure of administration . . . there will be then a narrowing above, and you can call the fairly high stages—you can call that your oligarchy. But this doesn't settle the question where the true power, legal power, resides. This is, you know, in other words,[101] one of these sociological interpretations of political things which are politically so misleading, although they may have a certain value for the non-political parts of public administration, perhaps. I would have to ask . . . about that. Good. So we will begin next time at this place with the confrontation of the two passages on law.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "his."
[2] Changed from "I mean there may be some doubts which one may have in other respects of Collingwood."
[3] Deleted "truth."
[4] Deleted "it."
[5] Deleted "from."
[6] Deleted "They only have to be—."
[7] Deleted "So that."
[8] Moved "for that."
[9] Moved "in a greatly more sophisticated manner."
[10] Moved "in fact."
[11] Moved "institutions."
[12] Deleted "this—."
[13] Deleted "see, what."
[14] Deleted "So Hobbes—."
[15] Deleted "criticism—."
[16] Deleted "There is—."
[17] Deleted "have."
[18] Moved "here" and deleted "now."
[19] Deleted "here now."
[20] Deleted "have seen."
[21] Deleted "assert."
[22] Deleted "With error."
[23] Deleted "derivative."
[24] Deleted "The thought is—."
[25] Deleted "it."
[26] Deleted "what."
[27] Deleted "What is extremely interesting—."
[28] Deleted "he."
[29] Deleted "They."
[30] Deleted "in that form that."
[31] Deleted "This is not the mere—."
[32] Deleted "by you."
[33] Deleted "do not."

[xviii] Robert Michels (1876-1936), German sociologist. He explained his "iron law of oligarchy" in a book published in 1911 and later translated into English *as Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*,

[34] Deleted “from my own knowledge.”
[35] Deleted “this.”
[36] Deleted “derivative.”
[37] Deleted “certain.”
[38] Deleted “now.”
[39] Deleted “in order to be—.”
[40] Deleted “if—.”
[41] Deleted “This.”
[42] Deleted “So he.”
[43] Deleted “Peculiarity of Rome. Not—”
[44] Moved “passages.”
[45] Deleted “For.”
[46] Deleted “that.”
[47] Deleted “that.”
[48] Deleted “You can have—.”
[49] Deleted “**LS**: To—? **Mr. Butterworth**: To Vico?”
[50] Deleted “of course.”
[51] Moved “that.”
[52] Deleted “And this is—.”
[53] Deleted “But then, alright— But then for our clarity—”
[54] Deleted “It’s.”
[55] Deleted “the” and moved “confused.”
[56] Deleted “the first man.”
[57] Deleted “but this does not solve”
[58] Deleted “What can—.”
[59] Deleted “The duty—.”
[60] Deleted “that he—that.”
[61] Deleted “this.”
[62] Deleted “a.”
[63] Deleted “a more.”
[64] Deleted “goes.”
[65] Deleted “before—.”
[66] Deleted “This.”
[67] Deleted “an un—.”
[68] Deleted “whether—.”
[69] Deleted “Physical truths—.”
[70] Deleted “truths here—ideal.”
[71] Deleted “is it—.”
[72] Deleted “I can only give here—.”
[73] Deleted “with particulars.”
[74] Deleted “Viconian.”
[75] Deleted “How is the great question.”
[76] Deleted “The consequences—.”
[77] Moved “just as in Plato.”
[78] Deleted “the—by the way.”
[79] Deleted “they were not—.”
[80] Deleted “They—.”
[81] Deletee “they.”
[82] Deleted “LS: 218: Student: Yes.”
[83] Deleted “—you can.”
[84] Deleted “I mean, that is—.”
[85] Deleted “I mean, if—.”
[86] Deleted “that was.”
[87] Deleted “much.”
[88] Deleted “that.”
[89] Moved, “in Plato” from the end of the sentence.

[90] Deleted “say.”
[91] Deleted “what do they—.”
[92] Deleted “this purely—.”
[93] Deleted “of.”
[94] Deleted “I mean.”
[95] Deleted “Now what is—.”
[96] Deleted “there is.”
[97] Deleted “is therefore not uni—.”
[98] Deleted “what.”
[99] Deleted “in the.’
[100] Deleted “treat.”
[101] Deleted “this is.”

Session 7: October 21, 1963

Leo Strauss: We have not finished our discussion of the . . . and[1] therefore we must return to it. There is only one[2]—no, two points, "Whatever is, is right." You quoted. Who said that?

Student: . . . .

LS: No. I happen to know that by some accident. Mr. . . . , you said something?

Student: No . . . .

LS: Alexander Pope, yes. This world is the best of all possible worlds, which doesn't exclude evil. So that is different. But still,[3] when Pope brought out[4] his poem, he was accused of having stolen that from Leibniz, and so we were reminded of Leibniz, and there is some element of truth to that. In other words, Leibniz's position was called optimism. No? That[5] was the original meaning of optimism, which is now used by everyone on all kinds of occasions without in any way implying the best of all possible worlds. If he thinks that the recession, if it comes, will not be too bad, he is an optimist. Originally it[6] [had] a very strict meaning: this world is the best of all possible worlds. Yes, what's wrong with that? Given the theistic tenets from which Leibniz argued, must it not be the best of all possible worlds? Yes?

Student: . . . that if God were perfectly concerned with man and perfectly good, and perfectly omniscient . . . on that basis, because it presupposes a distinction between possibility and . . . possibility. That is to say that however perfect God can be, he would not be able to construct in it a hierarchy of the good such that all could be actualized simultaneously without a partial limitation.

LS: What you stated was somewhat complicated; I didn't quite follow it. I mean—well, the key point, I believe, was that Leibniz's doctrine was construed as denying God's freedom proper. Because he was compelled by his goodness to choose the best of all possible worlds.

Student: That was my point.

LS: Yes, good.

Student: . . . If there was another, imaginary possibility, was God, was he compelled?

LS: Yes, but the compulsion was through the goodness. Now[7] I give you another example which shows you the difficulty, a simpler example. When Leibniz discusses the objection, how is this doctrine compatible with the traditional Christian teaching of original sin, his answer was this: the universe is infinite. The whole drama of fall and redemption takes place on a single planet in an infinite universe. The rest of the universe is free from original sin. So original sin is not so bad; it's located on this single planet. This was one way in which he tried to get out of his difficulty. Yes?

Student: . . . Kant's alternation between an original intuition and a derivative intuition,[8] because[9] [man's] wishes are only derivative, that is to say they presuppose the objects of his experiences, God makes them—

LS: Oh, no. This notion of an *intellectus originarius*. I mean an original intellect is not a creation of Leibniz, it is older. I don't know when it stems from.

Student: It's older than—

LS: . . . yes. Surely Kant's immediate authority . . . Leibniz; there's no question. But this teaching is not original to Leibniz.

Now there was another point, the translation of *conscienza*. Where is—Mr. Rotella isn't here. Oh yes, it means both, doesn't it? And the original meaning is of course conscience. I think in French it is the same: *conscience*[10] *scientifique*; scientific consciousness. Yes, but I would translate it in an older text ruthlessly by "conscience," and[11] try to understand how conscience came to be consciousness. In other words, conscience, which means you are . . . you do something and you are aware of it, that you do it. And of course the primary meaning is in a conspiracy, for example, or any affair of this kind; there are so many *conscii*, fellow knowers, about the situation. But the concept of consciousness is a very complicated and derivative philosophic concept, and one should not start from it. One should rather understand how it emerged. I mean, in the nineteenth century it was a most elementary term, [even] already in the late eighteenth century, in Kant, for example. And yet men philosophized for millennia without knowing anything of the consciousness. It's a very great problem, how the soul was replaced by the consciousness. Conscience has a more limited meaning. In the . . . it refers especially to man's judgment and so on about his actions, from the point of view of sin or non-sin. Yes?

Student: It seems to be—especially in the . . . in nineteenth century—that not really knowledge, in the sense that one knows . . . or that experiences. There seems to be something mysterious that comes from the awareness.

LS: Well, I mean it goes back somehow—but[12] [this] is not a sufficient explanation—to Descartes. You know Descartes abolished the soul by dividing it into consciousness, let us say . . . the idea, as it were—cogitation was his word, cogitation. And other things, the vegetable and animal soul—life—that's simply mechanical motion. This, the Cartesian split, is the basis of the concept, but the "consciousness" is the child of Descartes' concept of cogitation. And[13]—it's very strange—cogitation, of course, was originally one particular kind of having something in one's mind. Descartes uses it for everything. The other side of it is the idea, as Descartes uses it. You know, any object of the consciousness as such is called an idea by Descartes, and that is taken over by Locke and the others.

But old Hobbes, who still lived with one foot in the sixteenth century, he did not adopt that; Hobbes never uses such a single term for the ideas. He says thoughts *and* passions. Thoughts are what would be regarded as the ideas; but passions, of course, would also be ideas in Descartes' sense. But Hobbes denies that; he cannot yet bring himself to admit that this forms a unity on this

new basis. It's a very . . . process that we will come to in other such . . . processes very soon. Yes?

Student: . . . comes up in Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* . . . .

LS: But there,[14] it does not yet have this . . . . Yes. I believe that.

Now I think we have to start first with that very important passage where we stopped last time. Paragraph 292, following, where we find the notion of a natural royal law, regal law. And then, developing that in the three following paragraphs, we reach the conclusion that the ideal eternal history with which Vico is concerned is in fact the totality of natural laws regarding the course of political life—the course of political life—and each of its stages. For example, that you have first this half-aristocracy, and the structure of this half-aristocracy. Then the transition from that to, say, democracy and the structure of democracy. The transition to monarchy. The structure of monarchy. So—and this is one matter of utmost importance.[15] Did we go beyond that last time? [16]No, no. I think this was the point. Let us start from that.

What is this concept of laws of nature? We must reflect on that for one moment. You know,[17] in present-day social science they do not normally speak of natural laws, but what they mean are natural laws: laws of behavior. It would be interesting to find out why they[18] no longer call them natural laws, apparently limiting natural laws to physics, and I suppose also to chemistry and biology. Would Mendel's laws,[19] [the] laws of genetics, be called natural laws in ordinary usage? I do not know. I ask you. The Mendelian laws: Are they normally referred to as natural laws, or is this change due to the fact that statistical laws are not called natural? I simply do not know. Yes?

Student: Aren't they talking about crude hypotheses rather than laws—?

LS: Yes, certainly, they are not always so—sometimes they speak only of correlations. You know, correlations rely on a number of series of variables and all kinds of things. But ultimately when they speak simply, without methodological precautions, they speak of laws. Yes? Mr. . . .

Student: From my little acquaintance with natural science . . . laws of nature, at least in the older school, as he says . . . . But they still do talk about laws of nature; I mean Newton's laws, for example. I mean, they're still considered laws.

LS: Ya. Well, and you know in the earlier stages, at least in the nineteenth [century], Comte called his social science of sociology "social physics," which means physics applied to society. And even today the model of the natural science is authoritative for the behavioralists. So we have to consider for one moment this concept of laws of nature [and] what it means. Did you consult Thomas Aquinas?

Student: . . . .

LS: Good. So for the time being we will leave this open. Fortunately we have one text, one text where the older view of laws of nature occurs, surely occurs—I mean, I have it in front of me—

and so how far it goes back is dark. But this is in Hooker, in the Everyman's Library edition, page 150. Now I will read it to you: "All things that are, have some operation not violent or casual." "Violent" meaning imposed against the nature of the thing, and "casual" means by mere chance. "Neither doth any thing begin to exercise the same, without some fore-conceived end for which it worketh." Anything, not only man. "And the end which it worketh for is not obtained, unless the work be also fit to obtain it by. For unto every end, every operation will not serve. That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the formal measure of working, the same eternal law." This is Hooker's definition and, therefore, he can speak later on of the law which natural agents observe, i.e. laws of beasts and plants and inanimate beings. And he speaks in this connection also of laws in the plural. So in other words, independently of modern science, the term laws of nature existed; it was apparently not very frequently used. And this is a very dark story of which I would like to know much more than I do. But the key point of this notion is that[20] the term from which we can understand law is the end. The law determines the operations conducive to the end. And from this it follows clearly that there will not be universally the same behavior of all individuals of the species. Some achieve their end, others don't. And there are infinite ways in which they fail to achieve that. The only uniformity, so to speak, is supplied by the end, not by the way to the end for the reason given.

In modern language, which is very bad to use but which is now necessary, the only thing which is certain is the ought. The is: chaotic; ought: almost chaotic. Do you get this point? I mean, it is of course not strictly speaking[21] an ought, because the end is as much . . . of is as . . . . Is this point clear? No?

Student: Would you try it again?

LS: I will do it, but on a somewhat broader basis. I will do it with my modern definition of law, and this I take from Spinoza's[22] [*Theologico-Political Treatise*], chapter 4, near the beginning. Let me also read it.[i]

> The word law absolutely taken means that according to which each individual or all or some of the same species act in one and the same certain and determinate manner. The law in this depends either on the necessity of nature or on human arbitrariness. The law which depends on the necessity of nature is that which follows from the nature, or the definition of the thing itself necessarily. And from human arbitrariness, that which men have set up . . . . For instance, that all bodies when they impinge on other smaller ones, lose so much from their own motion as they communicate to the others, this is a universal law of all bodies which follows from the necessity of nature. In the same way that man, when he remembers one thing at once remembers something similar, or what he has perceived at the same time with that is a law which follows necessarily from human nature.

Good. So here you have a law of universal behavior, if I may say so. Universal behavior. And of course the Newtonian laws, the laws of inertia, are all laws of universal behavior, and here you have no reference whatsoever to the end. This we must try to understand somewhat before we can—.

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[i] Strauss's translation.

Now, so the first step we take in—Mr. . . . —good. So the older notion, which we find in Hooker and of which there must be traces also elsewhere—I remember a single passage from Thomas Aquinas, but I can't find it and I have to trust that . . . with the help of . . . will find it. But it occurs there. The older notion in based on teleology. There is an end. The modern is on the basis of the denial of that notion. Take any of the Newtonian laws: there is no reference whatever to ends. The end in its term presupposes however the essence, because there are a variety of beings—dogs, cats, olives or what have you—and the end differs in each case. The modern view, I will say in advance, is based on the denial not only of the end but also of essence, i.e. that there is a variety of essences, that there are essential differences.

Now, how do we perceive the essence? According to the Aristotelian view—the Platonic view is the same—there is something called the mind, and something by virtue of which men perceives; in the language of Shakespeare, the mind has an eye;[23] there [are] not only the eyes of the body. Good. So in this way we perceive the essence, but we perceive also something which is[24] called the property, especially the so-called essential properties—for instance, that man is a rational animal; that's his essence. That man is a laughing animal: laughing is an essential property. That's in pragmatic terms. If you try to understand man by starting from the fact that he is the only animal which laughs, you get involved in a very cumbersome procedure, whereas when you start from his being the rational animal, you understand that he is a laughing animal and also that he does other things in a much more natural way. Laughing is only a property.

Now these properties—this was the point where the whole thing started: irreducible properties. In other words, if you know how laughing comes about (under what conditions), this does not really help you to understand laughing in the economy of manners. The most famous example, because it was used by a great public poet, is the *vis dormitiva*, of opiate, in Moliere's—how's it called—[students reply] *Le Malade Imaginarie*, *The Imaginary Sickness*. Opium makes men fall asleep. Why? Because it has a *virtus dormitiva*, a power to make one fall asleep, yes? Tautology enter[s]; they laughed for a couple of centuries about this wonderful joke. But of course it is not as simple as that, because surely the chemical formula for opiates is very good for making substitutes for opium and what have you, and perhaps for other purposes. But this whole[25] chemical investigation would be meaningless if we did not know in the first place that this composite, opiate, has the dormitive power, and from which we must start if the chemical analysis is to be of any value.

So here I [will] read you another beautiful[26] document or milestone to the event which we are discussing. Hobbes's *Leviathan*, chapter 46, at the beginning, where Hobbes defines philosophy: "By philosophy is understood the knowledge acquired by reason, from the manner of the generation of any thing, to the properties; or from the properties to some possible way of generation of the thing;" (i.e. of the property) "to the end to be able to produce as far as matter and human force permit such effects as human life requires." Now in the Latin version of the same work which appeared seventeen years later (but the time span is much shorter, as we could say) is this. In the Latin version, the later version, he replaces "properties" by "generations" or[27] by "effects." The property, in other words, is an effect like any other effect. And effects have causes. "Causes"[28] means here, naturally, only material and efficient causes. There are no properties; there are no essences. This is a vulgar concept—you know, common sense notions

which have to be abandoned, and we have to replace them by statements indicating the material and efficient causes. This is the key point. Essence of the thing is the genesis of the thing, and the genesis of the thing is some form of making. Not, of course, in the case of natural things, human making, but either divine or natural making—some making. So to understand a thing means to understand its coming into being or its making. You remember Vico's nature: the birth, the origin, in paragraph 147. From this one can draw also another conclusion. Good.

Now let me first finish it.[29] First we have seen that knowledge means the understanding of nature. And then there comes the great step which Vico clearly took, but [which] some others before him [took also]. Knowledge itself is made, because if I know how it is made, I can make it too.[30] I may not have the power to make earthquakes, but then I can only say to Archimedes: Give me the point to stand [on] and the material; I can make you an earthquake. So knowledge itself comes to be made. But here is the difficulty: Do we really know how natural things are made? And the prudent answer seems to be that we do not know. It's a mystery. So then there cannot be knowledge of natural things, because we do not know their making; we can only have hypotheses about them.[31] Therefore the only sphere of genuine knowledge is mathematical knowledge, because the mathematical figures as well as the arithmetical numbers we have made. Hobbes is the one who has stated this most clearly, and the result of Hobbes is this: we have knowledge strictly speaking only of mathematical or quasi-mathematical things, and of political things because we have made that big leviathan.

I must say, you see that I am an old man now and I must tell you some things to watch which younger people do not know. The memory is so unreliable. I was absolutely sure that there is a passage in Hobbes where he clearly puts these two things together—that we have knowledge only of the mathematical and of the political, not of any natural things. I can't find it. I have a reference to a passage in my *Natural Right and History*, page[s] 172 to 173, but it is not clearly there in any of these passages. I believe it is a legitimate inference from Hobbean utterances, but I do not believe the utterance as such occurs anywhere. Surely he who wishes to study Vico . . . would have to go into that question. Good.

There is a study by an American scholar which I use—I found a reference to it . . . on the *verum/factum* thing, and there you get also—I suppose he put it better . . . . Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes. Very good.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but that is very helpful for Father [Warren], who does not know all the passages in Hobbes. I didn't say that's a good article, I said it's a useful article.

Student: . . . .

LS:[32] I didn't know . . . . But it was clear to me all the time that this is Hobbes because I remembered it in this form—

Student: He compares Hobbes and Vico and Dewey.

LS: Yes. Well, Dewey is irrelevant and impertinent[ii] in this connection, obviously, because he could not have had any influence on Vico.

Now there is a certain difficulty discussed I think very well by Croce in his book, because there is a passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in 1051a31, in which Aristotle seems to say the same thing. But[33] Aristotle speaks here only of mathematics, and in a very special context, and Croce is absolutely right when he says this is not the source. This is in Croce's book, page 288 and thereabouts.[iii] And he also mentions that there was a theological heritage different from the Aristotelian view that he alone knows the things who makes them, i.e. God. But clearly[34] this was never applied to the political things in particular. Now the simple basis of the statement is of course this: the old story of the arts. The shoemaker knows his shoe because he knows everything out of which he made it, why he made it, and so on. But the key point [is] that the political things are of this character, that they are strict artifacts and, therefore, fully knowable without any mystery. In other words, the polis is not by nature. If it were by nature, it wouldn't be of human making and this would be impossible. Now Vico takes this over and draws considerable conclusions from it. We come to that later. I would like to mention only one difficulty regarding Vico. Do we make the political things, the *mondo civile* strictly speaking, according to Vico?

Student: No.

LS: Of course not. What did these poor savages know about it—what was somehow going on in them? But without their understanding it, naturally, they did not strictly speaking make it. They surely did not do what they did consciously. This is the difference. For according to Hobbes' view, we make the leviathan consciously, or at least we can make it. If it's a good leviathan we must make it consciously. But for Vico that is nowhere. So this statement is rather obscure in its meaning in Vico himself.

Let me add only one more point. In studying such a concept as the "laws of nature" as used in the Newtonian laws (I mention the most famous example), but then [they are] transferred by such men as Vico to political matters as well. It is of course never enough to confirm that with the tradition, i.e., the Aristotelian tradition. Never. And I think many wrong things that we read in the literature are due to the fact that people consider only this commanding, ruling tradition. There was also a tradition of a radically different kind. Let us take a simple example. As people say, up to the sixteenth, seventeenth century, the closed universe; and now the open, infinite universe. As if there had not been plenty of ancient thinkers who spoken of infinite . . . the Epicureans, Democritus, and so on. So the question is, then, applying it to natural law: Do we find anything of natural law in that tradition? I remember only one point. [LS writes on the blackboard] Lucretius speaks frequently of . . . . I never know how to pronounce Latin in [an]

[ii] Presumably Strauss means "not pertinent."

[iii] The relevant text appears to be Croce's discussion of *Metaphysics* IX.9 1051a23-33 (though Croce incorrectly identifies the passage as coming from Book VIII at 1051b). *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, p. 296.

Anglo-Saxon way. How do you read this? . . . *natura*. Is this how you pronounce it? Good. Well, the "contracts of nature"; and one can translate it, since "contracts" doesn't make any sense here immediately, the "laws of nature." But under one condition, as the commentator on the passage mentions: Lucretius does not think of an observed uniformity in nature, but rather of the limit which nature imposes on the growth, life, power, etc., of things. In other words, that the sun cannot go further than it goes; there is a limit to its course. This is a law, not that which describes the cause of it. So that is not the modern natural law in any way.

Now what, then, is the decisive difference? I mean at least to the extent to which we can understand it without making any further study. Well, the ancient philosophers, both camps, were concerned in the first place with discovering what they called simply the first things. Let us take the most simple of these schools: the Democritean, Epicurean. The atoms. To establish the fact that the first things are the atoms in the world, that was the decisive thing. And of course also to show that any phenomenon—earthquakes, eclipses—can be understood on that basis. But they were not concerned with the law[35] by virtue of which you can understand, say, an eclipse. Later on Kant at the end of the process, as it were, formulated it, that science is concerned not with the why, but with the how. He stated it from the end of the process because the law, one can say, tells you how things happen but does not give you the why. But this is an explanation after the event, not before, not in terms of the men who made that event. This much only to remind you of one of these very difficult questions[36] which we somehow all take for granted because it has all happened long before our time, and it's part of our furniture and we inherited it like other furniture: perhaps [we] enjoy it or perhaps [we] do not enjoy it, but we do not think about it. For me this is one of the most difficult questions, the concept of the laws of nature. Yes?

Student: . . . . [37]

LS: He does not explain the why. It is hard to say how: how motion happens, what is the relation of action and reaction, this kind of thing. And he uses the particles of . . . mechanics and maybe any small object on earth. But to discover what are the first things out of which everything came into being, through which everything came into being as such—this was, I think, the guiding clarification of premodern thought, and in modern times this changed. It seems much more modest—only the how and not the why—and tremendously successful. Think of the thermonuclear bomb or for that matter other achievements of modern physics. Yes?

Student: Mr. Strauss, why did you bring in the discussion[38] of Hobbes[39] [when] discussing Vico's concept of knowledge? Is it to show the extension of Vico's change or is it . . . —

LS: No. What I wanted—well, my starting point was, first, we came across the first clear passage . . . where Hobbes speaks about a natural law which is not a normative law but a law of actual behavior, and this is a notion which was taken over from modern physics but had a tremendous influence up to the present day on social science. What I tried to show is that this is a peculiarly modern concept. A peculiarly modern concept. I mean, in many of [the] translations which people use, they use the term "laws of nature" in the translation of medieval or classical texts and therefore confuse the original meaning. I remember a case in the translation of *The Guide of the Perplexed*, with which I had something to do. The best translation hitherto [had been] made about a hundred years ago in French. The translator speaks all the time of *loi de la*

nature, where the author speaks only of nature. But by the nineteenth century, people had become so accustomed to understand[ing] nature in terms of laws of nature that it didn't make sense for him to say it was the nature of fire to do this and this. He had to say the law of nature. Good. And one must simply think about that. In Plato, the term law of nature occurs a single time,[iv] and only in the singular. And it means here nothing but the order of nature, the order of the cosmos. It is used as a deliberately paradoxical expression, because *physis* and *nomos* are opposites. And how it came about that people spoke of laws—for example, say, that heavy bodies fall, that would be called a law of nature—I do not know. I believe this has taken place at some time between, say, Aristotle and Galileo,[40] as is shown by the usage of Hooker who was not yet influenced by Galileo. That I do not know. Mr. . . . , of the Oriental Institute, taught me that a well-known Islamic writer of the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun—in the popular mythology regarded as another Vico (I mean [the] first sociological philosopher of history)—that he speaks in a way of laws of nature. He speaks of canons [LS writes on the blackboard]—well, the Greek word *kanon*. And he means by that (if . . . remembers well) rules apart from conduct. For example, how diseases run their course—this kind of thing and not[41] normative laws.[42] I will look into it. This might help us a bit, but that is of course very detailed and far away. The main point is simply that the genesis of the concept of "law of nature" is dark, very dark. Yes?

Student: Several times we've discussed the requirement Thomas Aquinas puts on law, that it be universally promulgated. It would seem initially that there would be some difficulty with probing the ancients' conception of natural law and this requirement.

LS: Yes, but "universally promulgated" makes sense only in the case of rational beings, doesn't it?

Student: Yes.

LS: Sure, but why can it not be—the key point is that if it is universally promulgated, that doesn't mean that it would be universally obeyed. And that was the objection to normative laws. We want to have laws which will tell us what all men must do in fact, you know? If you know only about how men should behave, then you don't know how to manipulate them. But if you know what they must do, what they cannot help doing, then you can start controlling them.

Student: But "natural law" in its ancient sense seemed to put—with the promulgation requirement, it seemed to put an obligation on man to find his specific excellence, his specific fulfillment. It would seem to put a moral obligation on him.

LS: Yes, in the Thomistic sense, obviously.

Student: But could we say that this is the case? That each man clearly understands his specific excellence?

LS: Yes. Well, that of course is the difficulty from which people like Vico, but also Locke, start. They deny that the law of nature is universally promulgated in fact and that therefore the natural

[iv] As Strauss notes just below, it occurs twice, though it is in the plural in the former of these passages: *Timaeus* 83e4-5 and *Gorgias* 483e3.

law is known (to use Locke's revealing phrase) only to the studiers of that law and not to the dairy maids and spinsters of Great Britain, as he calls them. And therefore it is . . . . Surely, therefore, the modern natural law is mathematic. It is to be deduced and can be handed down in codes or, if you please, in Euclidean elements of natural law. You know that happened in the seventeenth century.

Student: In a way, modern natural law in the book says it is something that is not universally promulgated and yet, in fact, it is something universally promulgated because it is necessary.

LS: Yes, well,[43] there are various sides to this question, one of course being: How far can people who do not know it, who have not studied it, be held responsible? That's a very crude, but very practical question. But the meaning of natural law changed by this very fact radically, especially—well, no, then I would have to give a long lecture about the difference between modern natural law, which you have heard more than once . . . .

Some others on some other questions. Mr. . . .

Student: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: Is there any notion . . . connected with . . .

LS: Not that I know, not that I—well, I . . . this morning—unless I overlooked the most obvious thing—I looked up the Greek-English dictionary, which is not of course enough, but just on both words, *nomos* and *physis*, and there was not a single reference to that. So it cannot be *quite* obvious. But I happen to know that the expression "law of nature"—*nomos*, of course—occurs twice in Plato, once in the *Timaeus*, once in *Gorgias*. The *Gorgias* you will read,[v] so I don't have to tell you, but it has nothing to do with natural law in the ordinary sense. And [in] the other [it] means nothing but the cosmic order, paradoxically expressed because it would really have to be translated "the convention of nature," you know, according to the primary meaning of *nomos*. This would show the paradox here.

Now when the Stoics speak of laws of nature, as you know from Cicero's *De Republica*,[44] they're always in reference to human [beings] or the conduct of rational beings. And it is a question. I will be glad[45] [to find] any information about the term *lex naturae* not [being] applied to human beings, rational beings. In reality I ask you because I'm really looking for it. I did some guessing, but that was of no use. Yes? Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . but that's very obvious.

LS: Pardon?

Student: You spoke of this in your lectures on natural law—

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[v] Strauss was also teaching a course on the *Gorgias* during this semester.

LS: Yes, but since you come from St. John's: Mr. Klein, who knows infinitely more about these matters than I do—I asked him once and he said *leges naturae*, the laws of nature, never [appeared] before the seventeenth century, but *lex naturae* in the simple sense of the order of the whole [was] quite common. But then I found shortly afterwards a passage in Thomas by accident, where *leges naturae*, the laws of nature . . . just as it's used by Hooker, and therefore I believe that there is some room for further study. Yes, Mr. . . .

Student: Something . . . my own studies . . . . Roger Bacon was sort of a contemporary of Aquinas, actually—slightly prior to Aquinas—

LS: Show me the passage, not in a translation but in the Latin original.

Student: He uses both terms, *ius* and *lex*.

LS: But what does he mean by it?

Student: Well, this is my problem because I don't know.

LS: But does he mean, for example—[does he] refer to rain or ammonia or what have you, or does he refer to human action?

Student: I haven't . . . studied this but my impression is that he uses *lex* most often in the context of—when talking about the importance of mathematics for politics, which maybe . . . .

LS: Look it up and try to find a relatively clear passage and I will be grateful to you. This would confirm . . . notion because he has a hunch that this has something to do with the Arabic tradition which Roger Bacon knew quite well, as you know. So I'm going to have to say that. Good. Now this much about this question of natural law.

Now what else was there? Yes, well, I think we turn now for the time being to our . . . . In paragraph 330 Vico says again the absolute novelty of his new science . . . title *New Science* . . . enough.[46] [The] seventeenth century was the age—or the eighteenth century was—of the new sciences. Hobbes said of his—well, Galileo wrote of the new sciences. Hobbes said of his *De Cive* that it was wholly new, *totus novus*. Good.

Mr. Reinken: Did you want to pass over everything from 299 to 329?

LS: 299—no, I did not. Did you have one special desire?

Mr. Reinken: Not particularly, but I thought we had jumped—326 is appealing.

LS: Which one?

Mr. Reinken: The natural, 326.

LS: 326, but there are some before. All right. You are perfectly—we should proceed in an orderly manner. You are quite right. Now in paragraphs 298 to 301 there are a variety of allusions to the problem of the Hebrew people. Yes. For example, all Asiatic people remained in their original civilized state. Does he not say so? It's somewhere here. Paragraph 302: only the Phoenicians left Asia. But no nation was more impenetrable than the Hebrews. The implication: hence more barbaric. But we will find other passages which make doubtful Vico's acceptance of the biblical account.

It is more important for us to consider paragraph 308 following. Let us read paragraph 308.

Mr. Reinken: "The remark of Dio Cassius is worthy of consideration, that custom is like a king and law like a tyrant; which we must understand as referring to reasonable custom and to law not animated by natural reason." (308)

LS: Yes, but that is the question: Whether that is Vico's last word, whether these[47] earliest customs, arising naturally, however unreasonable, are not . . . or relatively speaking. Let us turn to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "This axiom decides by implication the great dispute, 'Whether law resides in nature or in the opinion of men'—"

LS: In other words, the old question of whether right is by nature or by convention. The old question. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "which comes to the same thing as that propounded in the corollary of the eighth axiom, 'whether man is naturally sociable.'" (309)

LS: Is there someone here who will interpret[48] why these are identical propositions in different terms?

Student: . . . .

LS: No, first you must interpret it. Oh, do you mean for the understanding of this understanding?

Student: Yes . . . .

LS: Yes. And?

Student: Would these be . . . considering that, would these two be identical?

LS: I see. In other words, there would have to be natural right along with . . . . But even that question is not explicable before we have understood the relation between the two propositions. What's the relation?

Mr. Reinken: The relation seems to be that since men always live together, it must be in their nature to live together. And living together means living according to right.

LS: In other words,[49] more simply: if man is by nature social, then and only then can there be natural right. If man is not by nature social, then there is no natural right but only right made up by men. That's the connection. But what you said[50] doesn't follow, because brutes which are social do not have right because they lack reason. That's simple.[51] In other words, Vico understood the issues very well. I mean, he was not a confused man. It is necessary to emphasize that. And if he talks confusedly, we have to find a nonconfused reason for his talking confusedly. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "In the first place, the natural right of nations was ordained by custom (which—"

LS: "By custom," which is the king and not the tyrant, as it were. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "(which Dio says commands us by pleasure like a king)—"

LS: "By pleasure." Keep this in mind. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and not by law (which Dio says commands us by force like a tyrant). For it began in human customs springing from the common nature of nations (which is the proper subject of our Science) and it preserves human society. Moreover, there is nothing more natural (for there is nothing more pleasant) than observing natural customs." (309)

LS: Here you are.[52] That's the first time and the only time where Vico brings out a hedonistic element in his thought, which we have never seen before. Well, we have seen before that self-interest is the basis—and the invisible hand—but this self-interest works in[53] [such a] way that what is conducive primarily to the self-interest is tested by its pleasantness, just as in Hobbes. Ya.

In paragraph[s] 314 [and] following he makes clear that since all nations develop independently of one another, the same right. This right is not of human origin, but [is] natural and proves, therefore, divine providence. This natural right, however, which develops naturally, is not the natural right of the philosopher[s], as he says time and again. And of course, nor is it the same as the natural right of the moral theologians. It is these things which we have seen before, these most primitive beginnings of humanity. The bringing to light of the true natural right is a most important theme of his new science.

Now let us read paragraph 320.

Mr. Reinken: "Golden is the definition which Ulpian assigns to civil equity: 'a kind of probable judgment, not naturally known to all men' (as natural equity is) 'but to those few who, being eminently endowed with prudence, experience, or learning, have come to know what things are necessary for the conservation of human society.' This is what is nowadays called 'reason of state.'" (320)

LS: Yes, he does not say it . . . . [vi] It calls itself, in good Italian or beautiful Italian, "reason of state." Civil equity is reason of state. It's the prudent judgment of what is conducive to the common good here and now. Now reason of state doesn't have to be taken in the most nasty view, but it includes nasty possibilities because sometimes it may be necessary to attack your neighbor for the common good. This is clear. Yes, paragraph 323 concerns that.

Mr. Reinken: "Intelligent men take for law—"

LS: For "*right*," for "right."

Mr. Reinken: "Intelligent men take for *right* whatever impartial utility dictates in each case." (323)

LS: "Equal utility," meaning no arbitrary preference is given. Is this not correct? Of course[54] it will give higher rights to citizens than to strangers—I mean, it's not in that sense impartial. But you, Mr. Reinken had a point in this section which you thought we should discuss, or was I mistaken?

Mr. Reinken: Not particularly. Part of 321: it says, "In good Latin *certum* means particularized, or, as the schools say, individuated; so that in overelegant Latin, *certum* and *commune* are opposed to each other."

LS: Yes, I do not know. Nicolini in his commentary always gives you advice as to [what] according to the best knowledge available today is the correct view or not. I think there is something to that, if I remember well, but I cannot keep this all in my mind. We are only concerned with what Vico does with it regardless of the . . . .

Mr. Reinken: But when Vico uses *certo*, isn't he thinking more of the particular than the true, which is the other meaning of—

LS: Yes, in one sense it is of course exactly the certain, like the certainty of fact. I mean, you know, something happens—that is a fact, that's certain. But it [is] also at the same time a *brute* fact, as they say. This I think is what he means by *certo*. Read 321, "The certain of the laws."

Mr. Reinken: "The certitude of the laws is an obscurity of judgment backed only by authority—" (321)

LS: Yes,[55] obscurity is the point—*fiat*. The Legislator said *that*, it's certain; he spoke. But whether it is right or[56] [not right] is by no means clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "so that we find them harsh in application, yet are obliged to apply them by their certitude. In good Latin—"

LS: Yes.

[vi] Strauss corrects the "nowadays" of the class translation and reads "in beautiful Italian" for Vico's "*in bell' italiano.*"

Mr. Reinken: And so on—"*certum* means particularized, or as the Schools say, individuated; so that in overelegant—" (321)

LS: Let us also read the next paragraph, which is more helpful.

Mr. Reinken:

> This axiom and the two following definitions constitute the principle of strict law. Its rule is civil equity, by whose certitude, that is to say, by the determinate particularity of whose words, the barbarians, of particular ideas, are naturally satisfied, and such is the law they think is their due. So that what Ulpian says in such cases, "The law is harsh, but so it is written," may be put in finer Latin and with greater legal elegance, "The law is harsh, but it is certain." (322)

LS: Yes, that's the point: precisely because of the lack of rationality is it harsh. But what you need is not mildness, in the first place, it's certain[ty]. It's [having] determined what to do and not to do. And this certainty will be transformed into truth if you understand the reasons, for example, once you have seen that sacrificing children was the only way in which man could come out of that original morass, and this harsh law will become in retrospect mild. Good. Do you see that? Because that was the only way of getting—excellent.

Now let us then turn to today's assignment; it is rather late but we have some time left. Paragraph 331: the fundamental verity made sure that the origins of mankind are intelligible. And how? Because it has[57] [its] origins in the human mind; the fundamental error is the study of the unknowable world of nature, which having been made by God is not knowable to man. The civil world is made by man and hence [is] perfectly intelligible to man; and, in other words, we understand only what we make—this point which we have spoken of before. And he refers here in paragraph 331: the principles of anything are to be found in the modification[s] of our very human mind. I mean, these terms—these expressions occur in Locke and to some extent in Descartes in fact. From this paragraph we would receive the impression, taken by itself, that the *New Science* is not based on natural science, because it is fully certain, fully clear and distinct and natural science is not clear and distinct, and a clear and distinct science cannot be based on a science which is not clear and distinct. But we have seen also other passages which demand the opposite conclusion: that Vico only enlarges Baconian natural science so that it becomes a kind of natural social science. This question we must always keep in mind.

Now let me see—let us read now paragraph 334. The three stages, which has been made very clear by Mr. Miller; the three basic steps: religion, matrimony, and *sepoltura*, burial. Yes? Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: I wanted to ask about what you said about . . . natural science.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Miller: I want to ask about what you just said about enlarging Baconian natural science. You pointed out last time, there are at least two passages—I remember one, anyway, in which it

is clear that Vico uses physical principles to base the *New Science* on. But I simply wondered if he needs it. But it seems to be a kind of—either a crude, obvious, commonsensical science, or—

LS: Yes, but that won't help—

Mr. Miller: Excuse me?

LS: That won't help, because the mere fact that—for example, how can he say that the lightning was not an arbitrary act of Zeus unless he has some knowledge of how these things take place?

Mr. Miller: It seems to be . . . went for a long time, for 200 years in fact, which is pretty—

LS: Yes,[58] his whole explanation depends on this. I mean, this effect of lightning, which is the basic step of civilization, could never have taken place. No, no—I mean, this is a question which we cannot solve now.[59] I hope we come across a passage which settles this question once and for all: whether the *New Science* is based on natural science or is independent of natural science. Hitherto I believe we cannot yet settle it definitely.

Student: Well, that seems to me like kind of a geometrical argument in the sense that geometry is arbitrary, a construct.

LS: Why?

Student: Very simply.[60] I don't know where in the world he would find evidence that forty feet of water saturated the earth for two hundred years and then these dry exhalations—

LS: Well, [61]I'm not now concerned with whether Vico's teaching is sound or unsound—

Student: But it has to be that way, at least—

LS: Yes, but[62] we don't have enough evidence. We have evidence, conflicting evidence, and we must see whether we do not come across a passage which settles this beyond a shadow of doubt. Otherwise, maybe beyond the shadow of any unreasonable doubt, but we don't know. Now 334 I believe is very important.

Mr. Reinken:

> Let not our first principle be accused of falsehood by the modern travelers who narrate that peoples of Brazil, South Africa, and other nations of the New World live in society without any knowledge of God, as Antoine Arnauld believes to be the case also of the inhabitants of the islands called Antilles. Perhaps persuaded by them, Bayle affirms in his treatise on comets that peoples can live in justice without the light of God. This is a bolder statement than Polybius affirmed in the dictum for which he has been acclaimed, that if the world had philosophers, living in justice by reason and not by laws, it would have no need of religions. (334)

LS: You remember he has discussed that before in paragraph 179, and he claims that his whole work is a refutation of Bayle's famous thesis . . . . But that is of course the very question, because granted that civilization could never have arisen except on the ground of religion, there would still be the question: What is the situation after the civilization has developed? But that's not the key point. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "These are traveler's tales, to promote the sale of their books by the narration of portents. Certainly Andreas Rüdiger, in his *Physica*, pretentiously called 'divine' and purporting to show the only middle path between atheism and superstition, is gravely reproved for this opinion by the censors of the University of Geneva. They charge that 'he states it with too much assurance,' which is the same as saying with not a little boldness. (Yet, in the Republic of Geneva, as being free and popular, there would be considerable freedom in writing)." (334)

LS: Now let us stop here . . . . yes, in the first place, there's a popular republic, and the question—I mean, assuming that freedom of writing is something good,[63] [and] we do not know what Vico thought about it. But if it something good, it would speak in favor of democracy versus monarchy. But we don't know; it's a big if, because maybe he was against freedom of writing. And the second point of course is this: What about Vico himself? He did not live in a popular republic—the opposite, it was an absolute monarchy. And therefore we must keep this in mind,[64] whether the insufficient freedom of writing existing in[65] [Naples] did not affect his way of life. In the next paragraph he[66] speaks of Spinoza, who speaks of a republic as if it were a society of hucksters. That's the translation—is *mercadanti* "hucksters"? Or not "merchants"?

Student: It could be both.

LS: *Mercatori* would be—

Student: *Mercanti*—

LS: *Mercanti*.

Students: —would be "merchants."

LS: I see. So . . . small merchants.

Student: Yes, small merchants.

LS: Yes, yes. Well, that is of course an allusion to Spinoza's utilitarianism . . . rationalism, calculating entering society, whereas our author denies that any reasoning or calculation presided over the emergence of societies. Yes?

Student: Go back to 334 . . . is he not saying in effect that it's never really possible for a whole human society to be atheist, or even a free popular society, which is the freest, that is, the most nearly philosophical? You can't get away with it; the censors at the university come down on you.

LS: Yes, probably. In other words, that would mean a line of reasoning which corresponds to that of Spinoza in this respect. One could even say this—and also a passage in Machiavelli: *Discorsi* I.10—precisely a free society requires religion, and therefore protection of the religion . . . I mean, which means censorship. Good. Yes. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . .

LS: Yes. I see, yes. In other words, some political freedom is required before there can be . . . . Yes. We'll come to another passage later . . . but let us see a few more things.

Paragraph 336, which is too long to read now. Originally there was incest between parents and children, naturally. Such incest is not forbidden by nature, as Socrates thought—[a] reference to Xenophon[vii]—i.e. it is not *rationally* demonstrable[67] [as] wrong, but by human nature, i.e. incest is *naturally* abhorred—that is to say, it is abhorred without reasoning, by a natural process without reasoning. Now this process is described. In the first ferine bestial stage, it was of course not abhorred. But after . . . .[68] Let us read a bit more in the next or otherwise[69] our backlog will be so great that we will never be done. In the first paragraph there, 338, he gives the variety of—let us read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

> To complete the establishment of the principles which have been adopted for this Science, it remains in this first book to discuss the method which it should follow. It must begin where its subject matter began, as we said in the Axioms. We must therefore go back with the philologians and fetch it from the stones of Deucalion and Pyrrha, from the rocks of Amphion, from the men who sprang from the furrows of Cadmus or the hard oak of Virgil. With the philosophers we must fetch it from the frogs of Epicurus, from the cicadas of Hobbes, from the simpletons of Grotius; from the men cast into this world without care or aid of God, of whom Pufendorf speaks— (338)

LS: Yes, let us stop. In other words, we must start—our method must follow nature. We must go back to the beginnings; we must reconstruct the beginnings on the basis of certain axioms derived from human nature and then follow the way of nature. And these beginnings are either inanimate beings like these rocks or beasts, or beings not cared for by god. That's one formula among the many—a formula ascribed, probably not quite correctly, to Pufendorf.[70] Why it is only a circumscription is of course quite revealing: in fact, he starts from such beings. From such beings, yes. And then the conclusion in the rest of the chapter: only superstitious fear could have transformed these "quote men unquote" into human beings. Regarding this, Mr. Miller spoke of a certain ambiguity regarding divining. Now[71] the pun, if one can call it a pun, is this: divinity means theology and means of course also the godhead. But Vico makes[72] an etymology: divinity comes from divin*ing*, from the divining, i.e. taking auspices, yes? Superstitious affairs of the pagans, the very early pagans. This primitive notion of divining is—and the view of gods going with it, this is the beginning of the development. So they did not know of god; they knew only of these very primitive divinities. And Vico all the time uses this as a proof that man has a religious sense by nature, which refers to the true God—is always obscure. One can say it as follows: it is

[vii] Vico cites and criticizes *Memorabilia* IV.4.19-23.

not the thought of God but the thought of some divinities in early man which gave another direction to the passions; it did not quite put the passions to rest. This is, I think, very clear in paragraph 340. What the philosophers do, the wise men do, is to put the passions to rest, to overcome them. What the legislators do, as he puts it, these early legislators, is to give the passions another direction, so that they can make possible human life. That's exactly the principle of Hobbes: the passions cannot be overcome, but they can be channeled, as it were, so that they will have only such consequences as are compatible with social life. Vico insists here that this requires freedom of will, giving the passions another direction; and, in other words, to that extent he confirms again the theological teaching. But we must raise the question: Can there be freedom of will on a level where there is only imagination and passion, and [where] reason [is] in no way effective? This becomes clear in the next paragraph, at the beginning of paragraph 341.

Mr. Reinken: "But men, because of their corrupted nature, are under the tyranny of self-love, which compels them to make private utility their chief guide." (341)

LS: Yes, they are tyrannized by self-love. They are not free. There is no possibility for them to act differently than they do under the spell of their needs and their superstitious fears, and out of this the higher stage arises—and of course only [from] each one's utility. In the middle of this paragraph: man in all these circumstances loves principally his own utility. In all these circumstances, regardless of whether it is at the beginning, or in civilized life. This is all in accordance with the Hobbes-Lockean teaching.[73]

Paragraph 342 deals in a very complicated manner with the question of natural theology. I think this must be read in the light of paragraph 331. We understand only what we make, i.e. we do not understand the word of nature; hence natural theology in the traditional sense is impossible. The New Science is not based on natural science, and not based on teleological natural science. There is an allusion to that here. Hence[74] natural science is the only way for establishing natural theology.[viii] In paragraph 343,[75] I think, he says it . . . explicitly that the New Science is *the* theology.

But now there come some very difficult paragraphs, 343 to -44, where one must read very carefully. You see, for example, here in paragraph 343, line 4: "omnipotence"; line six: "infinite wisdom"; line 8: "immense, infinite goodness". And in the next paragraph he speaks of "omnipotence"; top of page 127[ix]: "eternal wisdom," and "eternal goodness"—no longer "infinite." What does this mean? My question is aimed in a sense as follows: Can one prove the infinite wisdom of God by observations which are perfectly intelligible to man? Vico claims[76] that he can make perfectly intelligible this development of civilization from beast-like beginnings up to the top. Now[77] if it is perfectly intelligible, it does not require *infinite* wisdom,

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[viii] Strauss speaks quickly here, and he may have meant to say "the New Science is the only way for establishing natural theology." Rather than defending natural science, is he not suggesting that Vico held nature to be unintelligible and that the New Science offers a new support for a new kind of natural theology? See this paragraph as a whole, his comments just below on 346, and also those in session 17, near the end.

[ix] Strauss here refers to the pagination of the Italian edition for paragraph 344.

because man, in his finite wisdom, can understand it. Here[78] he alludes to the finiteness of the human mind at the beginning of paragraph 345. Paragraph 346, read that, please.

Mr. Reinken: "These sublime proofs of natural theology will be conformed for us by the following sorts of logical proofs."

LS: We may interpret the very beginning as follows: the only possible natural theology, i.e. philosophic theology, is the New Science. The traditional natural theology based on the cosmological or teleological argument[79] is not valid, because we do not understand it. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> In reasoning of the origins of things divine and human in the gentile world, we reach those first beginnings beyond which it is vain curiosity to demand others earlier; and this is the defining character of principles. We explain the particular ways in which they come into being; that is to say, their nature, the explanation of which is the distinguishing mark of science. And finally [these proofs] are confirmed by the eternal properties [these things] preserve, which could not be what they are if the things had not come into being just as they did, in those particular times, places, and fashions, which is to say with those particular natures, as we have set forth in two axioms. (346)

LS: Yes,[80] what does this mean? When he speaks of the logical proofs in contradistinction to the natural theological proofs, he says[81] we start from those first origins beyond which it is stupid curiosity to demand other ones prior to them. Now these principles are of course the modifications of the human mind. Does not the reference to divine providence go beyond these specific principles, namely, the modifications of the human mind? That is the question.[82] The natural—yes, we can I think link it up with . . . natural theology is of course based on the premise that things *could have* happened differently. Someone made this point today, I forgot who—Mr. Erickson, in your very complicated statement about . . . . Yes. Natural theology is based on the premise that things could have[83] come into being differently, otherwise one cannot prove god's omnipotence, infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. But he, Vico, seems to deny that things could have happened differently. That's a very dark point.

Yes, in the next paragraph Vico speaks of the two aspects of the New Science, the theological and the human, and at the end of this paragraph there is a reference to—read just the end of paragraph 347.

Mr. Reinken:

> This queen of the sciences, by the axiom that "the sciences must begin where their subject matters began" [314], took its start when the first men began to think humanly, and not when the philosophers began to reflect on human ideas (as in an erudite and scholarly little book recently published [by Bruker] under the title *Historia Philosophica doctrinæ de ideis*, which comes down to the latest controversies between two of the foremost minds of our age, Leibniz and Newton). (347)

LS: Yes, and Newton surely was a man of natural science, and Leibniz at least to some extent. So Vico couldn't have made this complimentary remark about Newton[84] had [he] regarded natural science as altogether impossible. This only in passing. Paragraph 348 at the end, the last sentence there.

Mr. Reinken: "The decisive sort of proof in our Science is therefore this: that since these orders were established by divine providence, the course of the affairs of the nations had to be, must now be, and will have to be such as our Science demonstrates, even if infinite worlds were produced from time to time through eternity, which is certainly not the case." (348)

LS: Yes, the infinity of the worlds was of course the great problem. There is a famous work of Fontenelle written in the seventeenth century, based on the old, ancient speculation.[x] He simply rejects it. Yes. Now[85] we cannot possibly discuss everything; that's very unfortunate. But perhaps it is wiser[86] to read a few more passages in this section than to go on to the Second Book, which we cannot possibly finish. Let us read paragraph 349.

Mr. Reinken:

> Our Science therefore comes to describe at the same time an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every nation in its rise, progress, maturity, decline, and end. Indeed, we go so far as to assert that whoever meditates this Science tells himself this ideal eternal history only so far as he makes it by that proof "it had, has, and will have to be." For the first indubitable principle above posited is that this world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human mind. And history cannot be more certain than when he who create the things also describes them. Thus our Science proceeds exactly as does geometry— (349)

LS: And so on.[87] The highest status of the New Science is proven by the fact—[it is] surely cognitively higher than natural science can be because we tell the story of what we make, so we know the innermost secrets of it. [But there is] the difficulty we have discussed before: we have not made it, strictly speaking. It was made in us, and through us, but not by us. Our ancestors, who created this world—but I as a Jew have to except myself, but most of you are . . . [laughter]—but I have to try to argue from Vico's premises. Yes, Mr. . . .

Student: I wanted to clarify something . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . . the problem of making and discovering. Now if you were able to construct a successful critique of pure reason, as Kant attempted, then you would have the best of both worlds, wouldn't you? You would have succeeded[88] in having the best of the ancient position and the best of the modern position—

LS: In what sense?

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[x] Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757). Strauss appears to refer to *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686).

Same student: —because you would know what you could know, and you would know what you could not know; you have constructed a critique, you . . . .

LS: I do not quite follow you.[89] I mean, what we can say [is that] Kant solves this problem by saying natural science, Baconian-Newtonian style, is of course possible; but it is ultimately harmless because it is only phenomenal: the truly human thing is transcendent. And one can show the essential limitations of natural science, therefore it is not[90] the truly human. That is, yes, but the truly human according to Kant is the moral law, and there is a moral law in Vico. What Vico does, his history of the civil world, is in Kant also, in his philosophy of history, but precisely in the mechanical part of that history. You may make this somewhat complicated . . . clear [LS writes on the blackboard]: there is a moral law[91] making prescriptions not only regarding men's private life but also regarding political life and international law, perpetual peace, all this kind of thing. This is moral law, which not only can only be known by pure reason, but must only be known by pure reason, because otherwise the dirtying effect of experience would deprive it of its purity. Good. Now[92] there is nothing of this kind—I mean, this you cannot possibly identify with Vico's ideal eternal history—

Same student: No, I just said that if Kant was correct—

LS: Now wait—

Same student: —then he would have succeeded in completely[93] doing away with the various controversies between ancient and modern philosophy.

LS: Let us first try to state it. Now what Kant says then is this.[94] Let us say this is perpetual peace, to take the simplest one: a perfectly peaceful order of all the nations; for all . . . . Yes, but you know how people and peoples are . . . . Kant anyway says this. There is a kind of mechanism of nature which is directed toward that end, i.e. which is in fact teleological but which works only by mechanical means—only by means of selfish calculations, as he put it, a nation of devils, a devilish human race. If they only had a little bit of sense [they][95] [would] act accordingly. The result of this [is] that Kant constructs the philosophy of history, as he calls it, starting from where Vico too starts, the most ferine, savage beginning, and leading in a complicated way—asymptotically, however (we never come [to] that)—asymptotically to the moral order. So[96] Vico has this [LS points at the blackboard] because Vico is also fundamentally mechanical; he does not have this [LS circles something on the blackboard].[97] There is a moral law here; you find it in Vico in his Christianity. But this of course is[98] admittedly not a philosophic teaching. And whether he believes in it or not is[99] itself [in] doubt; but we can disregard that. The main point is [that] it is not a philosophic teaching, whereas in Kant this [LS repeatedly taps hard at the blackboard] is a philosophic teaching. So[100] can you now state your proposition regarding Kant?

Same student: Well, I don't want to take all your time but—

LS: That's nice of you—

Same student: —if, with respect to the controversy which we have been discussing,[101] you know what you make; but on the other hand, you do not know the grounds of what you make. Consequently modern philosophy operated in terms of placing the emphasis on the how rather than the why. But if you knew the limitations of what you can know, then by virtue of knowing the grounds or the various connections that you make, then you can have absolute and final knowledge—or at least you would know where to infer, or what you can infer apodictically and what [you] cannot, and on the basis of what you can infer apodictically, what you can hope for, what you can believe in, what you cannot, consequently a perfect solution to Kant's problem.

LS: Yes, but what you say is rather general. The same could of course be said of every philosopher; if you grant him all his premises, he solves all problems.

Same student: Yes, but Plato said that you couldn't because he said—

LS: Yes, sure, all right, because he thought—not only Kant, Descartes and Leibniz and Hegel—they all said "I have the solution" . . . . But there is a certain connection between Kant and Vico I would like to grant, but that is—I believe we cannot say more than that. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Because perfect knowledge. In other words, perfect knowledge—you have no proper knowledge of nature. Whether the highest things are the most important things, if I may put the question . . . we'll come [to] next time. Mr. Miller referred to that passage where[102] [Vico] distinguishes between the highest things and the best things[103]. You remember, you referred to that? We must take [this] up[104] next time. Let us do only one more thing: read paragraph 359, where he discusses the relation of philosophy and philology, which is—or philosophy and history.

Mr. Reinken: "These philological proofs enable us to see in fact the things we have meditated in idea concerning this world of nations, in accordance with Bacon's method of philosophizing, which is 'think [and] see.' Thus it is that with the help of the preceding philosophical proofs, the philological proofs which follow both confirm their own authority by reason and at the same time confirm reason by their authority." (359)

LS: Yes. So in other words, this is roughly the method of modern science: theory, observation. Yes. Theory modified in the light of the observation of data, and vice versa.[105] To that extent, he is a Baconian. Yes. Well, next time we will discuss the beginning of the first part of Book 2, and I hope that we will then—yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . Very Good.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "we have."
[2] Deleted "which."

[3] Deleted “they are somehow—.”
[4] Deleted “his book.”
[5] Deleted “is the first—that.”
[6] Deleted “is the first—that.”
[7] Deleted “but.”
[8] Deleted “in that man being—.”
[9] Deleted “his.”
[10] Deleted “*conscience.*”
[11] Deleted “see—.”
[12] Deleted “that.”
[13] Deleted “what.”
[14] Deleted “one could as well—.”
[15] Deleted “Now where did we—.”
[16] Deleted “No, I am very sorry.”
[17] Deleted “when.”
[18] Deleted, “do.”
[19] Deleted “that.”
[20] Deleted “the law—.”
[21] Deleted “not.”
[22] Deleted “theological treatise.”
[23] Deleted “there’s.”
[24] Deleted “also.”
[25] Deleted “investigation—.”
[26] Deleted “paragraph—.”
[27] Deleted ““effects”—.”
[28] Deleted “must, of course—.”
[29] Deleted “If knowledge, then—.”
[30] Deleted “I know the whole—.”
[31] Deleted “But—.”
[32] Deleted “I never—.”
[33] Deleted “what.”
[34] Deleted “there is no—.”
[35] Deleted “—with the law—.”
[36] Deleted “which take—.”
[37] Deleted “**LS**: Pardon? **Student**: [Inaudible words]”
[38] Deleted “here.”
[39] Deleted “in.”
[40] Moved “at some time.”
[41] Deleted “of.”
[42] Deleted “But he himself—.”
[43] Deleted “the question—.”
[44] Deleted “but.”
[45] Deleted “of.”
[46] Deleted “this.”
[47] Deleted “very.”
[48] Deleted “as.”
[49] Deleted “if man is—.”
[50] Moved “nevertheless” and deleted “this.”
[51] Deleted “But the connection is—.”
[52] Deleted “In other words—Here we have—.”
[53] Deleted “that.”
[54] Deleted “it will be—.”
[55] Deleted “it is.”
[56] Deleted “unright.”
[57] Deleted “the.”
[58] Deleted “although—.”

[59] Deleted “I hope we come.”
[60] Deleted “He just needs—.”
[61] Deleted “I do not.”
[62] Deleted “—I come only back.”
[63] Deleted “which.”
[64] Deleted “whether this—.”
[65] Deleted “Geneva.”
[66] Deleted “mentions—.”
[67] Deleted, “to be.”
[68] Deleted “So we—.”
[69] Deleted “we will.”
[70] Deleted “and at any rate, this—.”
[71] Deleted “this is—.”
[72] Deleted “an import—.”
[73] Deleted “There is—.”
[74] Deleted “the.”
[75] Deleted “he—.”
[76] Deleted “to make—.”
[77] Deleted “if it precisely—.”
[78] Deleted “refers—.”
[79] Deleted “are.”
[80] Deleted “this is—.”
[81] Deleted “it is—.”
[82] Deleted “Things could—.”
[83] Deleted “taken—.”
[84] Deleted “if he rejected—.”
[85] Deleted “we must—.”
[86] Deleted “leave it—.”
[87] Deleted “This is so—the.”
[88] Deleted “in eliminating—.”
[89] Deleted “What Kant does—.”
[90] Deleted “endanger—.”
[91] Deleted “prescribing—.”
[92] Deleted “this—.”
[93] Deleted “establishing—.”
[94] Deleted “So—.”
[95] Deleted “will.”
[96] Deleted “what Vico.”
[97] Deleted “There is no—I mean.”
[98] Deleted “not a philosophic—.”
[99] Moved “in.”
[100] Deleted “now, what—.”
[101] Deleted “you make—.”
[102] Deleted “he.”
[103] Moved “Vico.”
[104] Moved “this.”
[105] Deleted “That is—.”

Session 8: There is no record of session 8.

Session 9: October 28, 1963

Leo Strauss: I must say that simply because I must say the truth.[i] Of course . . . you made some excellent points. Now in the first place,[1] you said that poetic history is the sense of mankind in contradistinction to the intellect of mankind. That[2], I think, explains to us better than anything I have myself observed hitherto the meaning of "common sense"—you know, he refers to the common sense of mankind. I think we have to take the word "sense" very literally: common sense in contradistinction to common intellect. That's very, very important.

Then you spoke of Vico's assertion that words are by nature and not by convention. Now the traditional view was of course the opposite[3] [of] that, as you've implied.[4] One famous document to the contrary is Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*, where it is asserted that words are natural. But I mean one would have to study the *Cratylus* to see whether Plato means it; that's a long question, so we can dismiss that for the time being. Now, but the difficulty, of course, if one asserts that words are by nature, is the variety of languages. That this should be table in English and *trapeza* in Greek—what's the reason for that? Arbitrary. Now Vico gives an explanation. He refers to the variety of nations, to the natural variety. Incidentally,[5] I thought [this] was particularly helpful and shows how very carefully one must study the definitions which he gives. In which paragraph is the definition of nature, which you quoted?

Student: I quoted two.

LS: But was it . . . probably from the Elements.[ii] And if you have it—

Student: . . . Axioms 8 . . . .

LS: Axioms 8 and 14.

Student: Paragraphs 134 and 147.

LS: 134 and -47. Now[6] there is one which you read that was particularly helpful because there is a reference to place or time.

Student: That's 147, axiom 14.

LS: Yes. Can you read it?

Student: Yes. "The nature of institutions or things is nothing but their coming into being (*nascimento*) at certain times and in certain guises. Whenever the time and guise are thus and so, such and not otherwise are the institutions or things that come into being."[iii]

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] The "Elements" is the second section of Book 1 of *The New Science.*

[iii] The class translation twice says "institutions," but the student notes that the Italian text reads "things [*cose*]."

LS: So well, I think that "place" is also implied.

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . Yes, but surely the individual is the particular thing as it emerges. So if man has some peculiarities here at this time, and another one at another time, by nature, then this is as natural as what is common to men . . . . Now here he refers in particular to climate, but with the same right of course he could refer[7] to race.

Student: I think I didn't want to specify too much because I think . . . example—

LS: Yes, you see, but if the commentator Nicolini can be trusted, you need . . . . But that does not necessarily track from the . . . because the rule [that] what an author says once is much less important than what he says innumerably often is not self-evidently a sound rule of interpretation. And surely the key point is that Vico must make such an assertion. He may not speak of climate; he may speak of race or anything else but it must be a natural basis for the variety of nations, otherwise his whole theory is untenable.

Now of course the greatest man who did this shortly after Vico was Montesquieu, who says a lot about climate but also on other natural conditions. Now the key point is this: that the human race consists of various parts by nature, not by convention—i.e., that here you have this nation with this quality of characters, and here you have that nation, is not due to contract. Nations are not abolished by the fact that these and these men happened to have made a social contract among themselves and other . . . But[8] the natural basis for these men forming a nation, that is absolutely crucial.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, yes. In other words, a nation is a natural unity and the nationalism of the nineteenth century is based on that. But they got it more directly, at least . . . but more directly from Rousseau, than from Italy. But fundamentally it is the same doctrine. . . . pointed out the difficulties regarding[9] [the fact that] the three languages and letters are on the one hand[10] said to be successive, and on the other hand said[11] to be contemporary. You tried to solve this contradiction by—I'm not sure whether one can leave it at what you say, but the contradiction is underlying.

You noted that in his critique of the three princes of natural right—Grotius, Selden, and Pufendorf—he omits now the subject of providence. And you raise a question of what precisely does[12] providence mean in Grotius. Yes, well one can always say the difficulty as follows. He makes this assumption: man at the origin, which he discusses, is bestial. And given this bestiality, that he had to develop in this and this and no other manner, and not by virtue of a teleological necessity—I mean, in order to become civilized—but there were necessities effective on him and intelligible to him at the time. And by the virtue of the change thus made, he has new needs, as it were, and this leads to another change. But there is no teleological necessity in the world itself. And one could of course also say that given the assertion that these

bestial men are men after the fall, according to the official doctrine, to what extent is he entitled to call this a natural process if it is fallen nature, where all this takes place? That is another way of indicating the difficulty.

And the last point you make—I cannot agree with you—is what you say about Vico's assertion that name and nature[13] [are] the same.

Student: . . . .

LS: Not only the Greeks, but universally. Yes, but this is exactly a sign of the stupidity of early men: that they think that the name of a thing is the nature of the thing. And this is linked up with the criticism, which is not explicit, of Aristotle and the Scholastics. You know that was a famous syllogism that [student interjects in the background]—not only nominalists, but[14] that Aristotle did this, in the word of Hobbes . . . to examine words and not the things. You know, the constant objection was: What does the term mean? And the variety of meanings, this kind of thing. And it has to be noted that the truth in it of course [is] that the name[15] at the most[16] expresses certain qualities of the thing which . . . . [It][17] does not, of course, bring out the true nature of the thing as it would be brought out by Baconian science. So this is not Vico's last word on the relation of names and nature.

Student: What I meant to say is that he used this as a tool of analysis, that is, since these early people—

LS: . . . sense of the nature of a camera . . . .

Student: No, but to understand how early man understood, how they understood the camera—

LS: . . . Ya, sure, that is correct . . . . But if he would say the names which the various nations supplied originally to the various things they observed, this is of course not a clue to the things themselves, according to Vico. This has to be done by Baconian science. But as a clue to their mentality, it is all right. Good.

Now here we have a note from Mr. Butterworth: "Do paragraphs 424 to -7 imply that all words . . . engendered by Aesop's . . . are only products of natural reason which the process of history permitted . . . . ?" Can you read—I cannot read a key word, and therefore I cannot understand your question.

Mr. Butterworth: In paragraphs 424 to 427, he implies that all ideas engendered by Aesop's . . . poems are only products of natural reason, which the process of history permits . . . .

LS: Ya, surely, a certain stage of reason. A certain stage of reason.[18] Let us take the case of Aesop when the plebs[19] [were] in the process of no longer being fooled by the superstition of the patricians. This is a necessary step. Originally they were just still dumber than the early patricians, but then a stage is reached when they see that they are exploited, and this is a

necessary stage, and to that extent the ideas expressed by Aesop are necessary and natural in that stage.

Mr. Butterworth: Am I right in thinking that a necessary consequence of this is [that] you can never have a man who sees beyond his own time?

LS: I see now what you mean. Yes, that is true. But still, why could there not be time where absolute . . . . That is always the implication. In other words, after the new science was founded by Galileo or Bacon (you can also add Newton if you want to), it became possible for a man of the first rank called Giambattista Vico to apply this to human things and to understand, in principle at any rate, the whole thing. Now there is of course a possibility for further progress in details; this is a very sketchy book, after all. But the main . . . .

Mr. Butterworth: But then would it be fair to say of Vico that he considers himself as having this absolute understanding?

LS: Yes, but the point is that prior to Hegel, I believe no one who considered this difficulty of history ever brought this out. In other words, Vico does not explain how it comes that in that second round—the first round was that of classical antiquity and the new barbarism, and then the second round, say, beginning around 1500—why[20] in the second round[21] this [could] be seen[22] [when it] was not seen in the first round. He doesn't even raise the question which Hegel raised. And Hegel, therefore, said that Christianity had to be the religion of the modern, of the Western world so that philosophy could reach its peak. Vico has not made any such—at least hitherto I have not come across any reflection on this point. So in this sense it is much more naïve than Hegel.

Before we go on to our readings, I would like to state the general subject again: how to approach Vico. There are some very simple things which occurred to me rather late and that is a very common experience in scholarship. Some of you may have heard the expression "natural right and history." This is truly the formula for Vico. Natural right and history. Now I did not invent this formula. In a way I took it over from Ernst Troeltsch's essay which was published in the English translation by Barker and is now available, as I learned from Mr. Reinken, in paperback, as an appendix to Gierke, to that work of Gierke. I forgot—they're all taken from Gierke's *Das deutsche Gernossenschaftsrecht*, but I do not know how this is called.

Mr. Reinken: *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*.[iv]

LS: Ya, I see. There is an essay of Troeltsch[23] at the end, written after the First World War, after the defeat of Germany, and reflecting about the radical political differences between Germany and the West. And then he put it . . . from Germany that[24] the Germans abandoned natural right altogether and replaced it by history, whereas in the West [the] natural right or natural law tradition is still going strong. Well, it wasn't so strong around 1922 when Troeltsch wrote, and if he had come to live and see 1963 he would see . . . . But still, whatever may be true in academic

[iv] Ernst Troeltsch, "The Ideas of Natural Law and Humanity," in Otto Friedrich von Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society, 1500-1800*, trans. Ernest Barker (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

life in the popular orientation, I think that there is something to that. Now Troeltsch[25] admitted the political value of the natural right tradition but he himself rejected it. His main work is entitled *Historicism* and it deals with the problem of history, of historicism, but on a historicist basis.[v] Now this had some effect on the social science in this country. There was a writer very inferior to Troeltsch in learning and everything else, Mannheim, who wrote a book, *Society*—no, how is it called?—*Ideology and Utopia*, which was published [in] 1929 or thereabouts, and which is a very crude restatement of what Troeltsch meant and [was] also written from a somewhat narrow political basis.[vi] Still, Troeltsch is today forgotten and I think quite rightly, because what was interesting in Troeltsch was done in an infinitely more powerful manner by Heidegger. And as far as my study is concerned, this is due already to a reaction to Heidegger. And Heidegger takes over the historicist position, deepening it more beyond anything which has gone before. For me, historicism has become a problem; and therefore, realizing that it is a problem, I saw that the most direct alternative to history is natural right. Good.

But now to Vico. I wonder whether one cannot say that Vico was the first who went away from natural right to history, or who replaced natural right by history. And this, I submit, might be a good overall consideration. But we must be careful because he still speaks of natural right, but he historicizes natural right in a peculiar way. Now the first step of this investigation would then have to be an explicit critique of natural right, i.e. of the three princes,[26] Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf, which is repeated *ad nauseum*. But one would have to put together all these references and compare them. Mr. . . . began today, in a way, by observing that the repetitions are not identical restatements, but there are differences and one would have to watch them.

The second step, however, is to make clear something which Vico never says, in that his critique is in effect also a critique of Thomas Aquinas, of Cicero, and of any other natural teacher[vii]. And here in this context[27] we observe the fact that Vico is misleading regarding the bearing of his criticism, as if he criticized only these three men. One has to go into the whole question of how far his presentation is deliberately misleading. In plain English, the whole question [is] whether the exception of the Hebrews from the development which he describes can be maintained on this basis. Simply and more formally stated, one has to reflect on his way of presenting things, on his manner of writing.

Now the third point, after one has seen this, is then to study the variety of natural rights which he teaches. I mean not that the natural right of the gentiles should have been different in China from that in Mexico, because there isn't a difference, but the early stage, what he calls loosely the divine stage, the heroic stage, and the human stage—how they differ. There are various manifestations of natural right which differ both in the how and in the what. In the how: nonrational or rational; and in the substance, of course: prepolitical or political. Part of that is the necessary or natural sequence of these various forms of natural right.

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[v] Strauss appears to refer to Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922).

[vi] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1936). Originally published as *Ideologie und Utopie* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929).

[vii] Strauss presumably meant "teacher of natural right."

Now as a consequence—and[28] [this] is the fourth point—since the third stage is a stage of political life, of civil equity, one has to consider what precisely does natural right mean in that stage, i.e. the only stage of practical importance to us. And here one has to find out the full bearing of his assertion that civil equity is identical with reason of state. In other words, if civil equity[29] is the same as utility, it would amount to that. You know, reason of state is a nasty expression because everyone thinks of Machiavellianism; and utilitarianism is a nice thing, everyone thinks of these nice Englishmen, but it is of course in principle the same.

In this connection one has to discuss the question of democracy and monarchy because they both are forms of political life proper. Democracy—and I mean of this rational stage—and in particular the question of which of these two forms, if any, is higher than the other. We have made some reflections on that on occasion.

Then on the fifth point, we would have to turn to this fundamental question, namely, the theological form which Vico has given to his new science: his doctrine of providence, which reminded us of the invisible hand of Adam Smith. It surely means—and in this respect there is perfect agreement with later development—[that] what happens in the history of the world is that private vice or errors or stupidity or passions lead unintentionally to the common good. And this is of course meant to be true in all stages.

I mention two more items which one would have to consider, and I make these remarks not completely blind to the needs of either one—namely, the question: In what precisely does Vico's originality consist? Now one can say that he tries to give a natural or rational account of the history of mankind from its beginnings 'til when? Well, let us first say: To the end, so that it would be complete. Now this notion in its exactness, of course, is not in itself original because the Fifth Book of Lucretius gives such an account. But what is the difference between Vico and Lucretius? I mean,[30] that Lucretius is very short and Vico is very long I know, but why is Vico the long and Lucretius the short? Short speech and long speech as we have discussed[31] on another occasion.

Student: . . . . [32]

LS: I mean, but what is the simplest formula? Well, I think if you have heard it . . . .

Student: I was thinking of one statement where he says that certain people can't go beyond their faculty . . . .

LS: But what's the relevance of that? Do you believe that Vico—do we have proof that Vico would have denied that?

Student: No.

LS: Very simple—Yes?

Different Student: . . . form in which the two things are written?

LS: Well, you mean the one is in hexameters and the other is not in hexameters? No,[33] that's very obvious. If I remember well, the single proper name in Lucretius is . . . . [viii] The single proper name. So Lucretius' account is not based on any empirical historical evidence. It is a mere construction and no need is felt for any empirical historical support, whereas Vico is very much concerned with empirical proof of his account.

Another point which should be considered: in Lucretius there is a single process from his beast-men of the beginning to the wholly corrupt men at the end. In Vico there is at least one repetition of the same process, and there is a possibility that he played with the possibility of *n* repetitions.[34] I have no idea [how] to decide that. But the most important difference is this: Vico is very much concerned with showing the necessities, the mechanisms, of the process and of each of its stages, whereas Lucretius only[35] assumes that this is a sequence of stages; and then he shows [that] each of them emerges, but he never shows the emergence of one from the other. In brief, he is not concerned with the laws governing this history, whereas Vico is. And I think from this we understand now how[36] [serious] Vico [was when][37] he spoke of an ideal history. An ideal history I think means more than anything else, the laws. In other words, ideal not in the sense of moral ideals and so on, but in the sense in which mathematical objects are ideal objects: laws.

Can one then not say—and I submit this to you as a proposition—that Vico's new science is, as they say more or less here (they don't quite say it this way), the first philosophy of history or science of history as a social physics? Now where would we find a philosophy or science of history, of social histories before? I mean, that *The City of God* is not a philosophy of history but a theology of history is today generally admitted, and therefore we can disregard that. The same would be true of Bossuet.[ix] Where would we find it? Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Do they give a philosophy of history?

Student: Well, Polybius gives a certain account.

LS:[38] Polybius[x] calls his enterprise a "universal history"—universal history: *katholikē historia*—but he does not, I[39] believe, call it this way. If you mean his teaching regarding the sequence of regimes. Do you mean that?

Student: I mean that, and also the—religion as the secret of empire . . . .

LS: You know,[40] I think what you can say is this: Polybius writes a universal history, i.e. universal for the Mediterranean basin. And then on proper occasions, a good historian must give causes, and therefore he must sometimes—well, the most striking case is the Sixth Book where,

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[viii] Strauss may mean Memmius, though other proper names occur in Lucretius' poem.
[ix] Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) wrote the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* in 1681.
[x] Author of *The Histories*, which are reflections on the history of Rome from 264 B.C. to 146 B.C., Polibius was present at the final defeat of Carthage in 146 and presented his assessment of the Roman and Carthaginian regimes in Book 6.

in order to explain why Rome defeated Carthage in 724,[xi] he gives his whole doctrine of regimes and their succession in order to explain that. But one cannot speak of a philosophy of history there. Yes?

Student: . . . Machiavelli.

LS: To what extent is this a philosophy of history?

Student: Because it turns on finding out general laws based on empirical observations . . . .

LS: Yes, but you have to be careful. In the first place, of course, Machiavelli . . . flaws. Not that I know. I believe someone—what's his name?— . . . who wrote an essay which I once read on Machiavelli as a scientist; he proposed this.[41] He asserts that Machiavelli speaks all the time of general rules, legally general. And he speaks, I think, three times of that. And they have the character of practical rules, rules of how a prince or so should act—precisely not laws, you know, of how people or societies act. I believe that is very hard to say.[42] In other words, I would not say that the verities, the alleged verities which Machiavelli establishes and which he frequently formulates in the chapter headings of the *Discorsi* are different from certain statements, general statements of this kind which Aristotle makes. For example, that if you want to establish a rural democracy you must take these things, and of course there are certain statements which would be true of every regime, you know? I have not made a specific suggestion of how many of these chapter headings of the *Discourses* state what one should do as distinguished from what people in fact do. This would be necessary. I believe it is misleading[43] to call Machiavelli's work a philosophy of history, I mean in our sense of the word. Once this concept of a philosophy of history has emerged, then you can find of course[44] philosophy of history anywhere.[45] My favorite example [is] in Xenophon, the beginning of [the *Hellenica*], [the] Greek history, which begins with the word "Thereafter" . . . . It is the only book ever written which begins with the word "Thereafter." I have heard of a sermon which begins with the word "But," which [is] more easily intelligible because . . . . But a history beginning with "Thereafter" is absolutely unique, and reflection on this fact has been . . . by this very profound reasoning, because people say, with some justice, that Xenophon's Greek history is a continuation of Thucydides. And therefore[46] [there] is a mere continuation[47] [after the] "Thereafter." But the trouble is that what he says on the first three or four pages is still in Thucydides, so if he were such a stupid continuator, he would have begun—in addition, one can show in a sense he ends the work with the word "Thereafter"—not literally, but in fact. And what he wants to say is very legitimate,[48] especially from the conclusion of the work.

What is history in our age? "Thereafter" or "Then." . . . . "Then" is . . . . "Then," "then," "then." And in each case, confusion. People believe they will get rid of confusion by what they set out to do, say, waging a war or whatever it may be. That's the end of the book, the Battle of Mantinea in 362. The Greeks started the fight against Thebes because there was such confusion that they wanted to get rid of it once and for all, and thereafter there was as great confusion as before. Well, and we have only to take our limited experience in our lifetime to see how sound

[xi] This date should be 146 B.C., and it sounds like a simple and inexplicable mistake. Remember also that it is frequently difficult to hear Strauss or his students distinctly.

empirically this philosophy of history is. And . . . qualities philosophy of history, but it doesn't present itself as . . . . Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes. Well, I have to depend almost entirely on what I read in Mr. Mahdi's book.[xii] What does he—I mean, it was a long time since I read it; what does . . . do? What precisely does he set out to do? . . . stated it very clearly. I forgot it.

Student: I can't remember that myself, but it seems that it's an attempt to look back at historians and show the difference between history and philosophy.

LS: I see. If I remember well, what Ibn Khaldun is trying to do [is] this: to give a philosophic or a rational account of Islam.[49] This can be stated as follows: Islam presents itself as a divine doctrine and as superior to philosophy. Formally, Ibn Khaldun accepts that, but there are great difficulties if you leave it at that.[50] Good. So as a philosopher he tries to give an account of Islam, i.e. he must give [a] substitute for what one can call the super-rational history which is Islam's own self-justification . . . . And I believe this is what gives unity to his whole work.[51] I believe that the other considerations of a more general kind are incidental to this. I do not believe—well, since both of us don't know facts about Ibn Khaldun, it's wiser to be silent about that.

Now the last point to finish this account would of course be a critique of Vico: To what extent did he succeed in establishing such a social physics? And to what extent is such a social physics possible at all? Or differently stated: Is Xenophon's "quote philosophy of history end quote," which does not claim to find a rational order, not more sober? And well, we have seen and we will find other cases[52] [where] Vico of course cannot seriously claim that this simple schema which he develops—the three stages—is sufficient—I mean, for example, philosophy only in Greece and great differences in the various nations. We have had some examples before and we will find other cases.

Now we turn to our assignment. The key point which he makes at the beginning of the Fourth Book is that hitherto all scholars have separated[53] the origin of languages from the origin of letters. Now what is the common view? I think it is still the common view.

Mr. Reinken: Pre-literates babbled.

LS: Sure. Language precedes letters. Not only letters proper, but also any other signs as characters. And Vico rejects that. The dominant view is based on [a] failure to consider that the first language was mute, i.e. men did not speak from the very beginning, they communicated by signs. That's to say [by] something like letters.[54] Here the distinction between language and letters cannot be made because the first letters are hieroglyphs, signs. And signs were the first means of communications which men used, so to speak, orally. Now well, we do not have to go into the details of that.

[xii] Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[55]He mentions here the example as[56] proof the fact that we speak of grammar. Grammar is the science of language, and he says that if you translate it literally, "grammar" means "letter," and this fact proves the identity of language and letter, which is of course not true. It is a mere accident. Grammar meant originally knowing the letters for writing, and then it took on this larger meaning; language or the structure of the language is secondary. This argument is of no validity.

In paragraph 430 we find something which is quite interesting. Let us read this from the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

> Having now to enter upon a discussion of this matter, we shall give a brief sample of the opinions that have been held respecting it—opinions so uncertain, frivolous, inept, pretentious or ridiculous, and so numerous, that we need not relate them. By way of example, then: because in the returned barbarian times Scandinavia by the conceit of the nations was galled *vagina gentium* and was believed to be the mother of all other nations in the world, therefore by the conceit of scholars Johannes and Olaus Magnus were of opinion that their Goths had preserved from the beginning of the world the letters divinely invented by Adam. (430)

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Here[57] he summarizes merely an inept view of some scholar, but since he brings up the question of the letters of Adam, known to Adam, we must of course wonder what Vico thought about this subject. I mean, if letters and language are inseparable, what letters—and Adam spoke, admittedly—what letters did he have? And this was prior to the Fall, of course; he must have had some alphabetic language, [a] letter system which is far superior to that primitive hieroglyphic system. This would be an implication, and it would be necessary for Vico to face this question which, of course, he never does for reasons which we know. Yes, 433.

Mr. Reinken: "Around this truth we assemble the following others. Among the Greeks the words 'name' and 'character' had the same meaning, so that the Church Fathers used indiscriminately the two expressions *de divinis characteribus* and *de divinis nominibus*." (433)

LS: Yes, but of course the question of the divine names was always very important throughout the tradition. And these divine names did not mean—yes, that was a difficult thing at least to say these are also conventional. Think only of the Lord's name in Exodus . . . explanation of Jehovah as it is pronounced in the Christian tradition. This is not just a name because [it is the] the name which God used for himself. And somewhat later in this paragraph, when he comes to speak of the French, versus the Greeks—

Mr. Reinken: "Similarly, in Greek—"

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> Similarly, in Greek *nomos* signifies law, and from *nomos* comes *nomisma*, "money," as Aristotle notes; and according to etymologists, *nomos* becomes in Latin *nummus*. In French, *loi* means "law," and *aloi* means "money"; and among the second barbarians the term canon was applied both to ecclesiastical law and to the annual rent paid by the feudal leaseholder to the lord of the land he held in fief. This uniformity of thinking perhaps explains why the Latins used the term *ius* both for law and for the fat of sacrificed animals, which was Jove's due; for Jove was originally called *Ious*, from which were later derived the genitives *Iovis* and *iuris* (as pointed out above). Among the Hebrews also, of the three parts into which they divided the animal sacrificed as a peace offering, the fat was accounted God's due and was burnt at the altar.

LS: Yes. And a few more passages, when he speaks of and quoted from the twelfth law of the Twelve Tables. Yes? With the same thought of the ancient—

Mr. Reinken: "The Italians, following the same line of thought as the ancient Romans, called the manors *poderi*, as having been acquired by force. Further evidence: The returned barbarism called the fields with their boundaries *presas tarrarum*. The Spaniards call bold enterprises *prendas*. The Italians call family coats-of-arms *imprese,* and use *termini* in the sense of 'words' (a usage surviving in scholastic dialectic)." (433)

LS: Dialectic. Here he has condensed quite a few things. Now from the early identification of language and letters, i.e. the signs which signify the things naturally, men have high regard also in later times for words and letters, a kind of relic from the origin. Now the Greek language stemming from very early times still affects the usage of the Church Fathers, so that is to say even Christian theology. And[58] we find here another analogy of pagan things with Hebrew things. How can this be understood, this agreement between the Hebrew Bible and the gentiles in such a great matter if they have nothing in common? Must we not apply, in other words, [Vico's] principles of criticism[59] also to the Bible according to his own indications? Yes. And the importance of force, we will have to take up later. That comes up again in paragraph 435, for example, when he says shortly before the middle of the paragraph: "The plough."

Mr. Reinken: "The ploughshare signified that he had reduced those lands to cultivation, and thus tamed and made them his own by force." (435)

LS: "By force." Yes, the original right to property is force. This will be qualified and refined in the sequel. In paragraph 437, towards the end when he comes to quote Varro.

Mr. Reinken: "Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that among the Latins Varro occupied himself with the language of the gods, for he had the diligence to collect thirty thousand of their names, which would have sufficed for a copious divine vocabulary, with which the peoples of Latium might express all their human needs, which in those simple and frugal times must have been few indeed, being only the things that were necessary to life." (437)

LS: In other words, the many gods simply corresponds to the many necessities of life. The gods are nothing but the need for necessities. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> The Greeks too had gods to the number of thirty thousand, as has also been noted in the Axioms[xiii]; for they made a deity of every stone, spring, brook, plant and off-shore rock. Such deities included the dryads, hamadryads, oreads and napeads. Just so the American Indians make a god of everything that exceeds their limited understanding. Thus the divine fables of the Greeks and Latins must have been the true first hieroglyphics, or sacred or divine characters, corresponding to those of the Egyptians. (437)

LS: So the language of the gods is of course not a language which the gods spoke. These gods did not exist. But the language of human beings, of the early human beings, in terms of gods—all things are gods, i.e. all things of importance to them are gods, namely, the things which they need. Everything which early men needed was understood by them to be a god. Now Feuerbach['s] nineteenth-century *Essence of Religion* is in a way a restatement of that.[60] I remember near the beginning: "Why is a cow sacred in India?" Well, because the cow [is] the most important thing for them. These things have by now become trivial.

In 440 when he says, for example, of the Phoenicians, that they were the first trading nation of the world, there's another indication of the fact of the peculiarities of the nations, I mean [that] the development is not everywhere the same . . . .

A little bit later on when he comes to speak of the Chaldeans. Will you read that?

Mr. Reinken:

> The Phoenicians brought to Greece hieroglyphics received from others, and that these could only have been the mathematical characters or geometric figures which they had received from the Chaldeans. The latter were beyond question the first mathematicians and especially the first astronomers of the nations; whence Zoroaster the Chaldean (whose name means "observer of the stars" according to Bochart) was the first sage of the gentile world. (440)

LS: So in other words, the wisdom of the nations begins with mathematics and astronomy, which is in itself the basis of a chronology.

Mr. Reinken: In paragraph 440 he seems to be accepting diffusion as coming at the third, or human, age, which is the age of intercourse among the nations, almost as if—

LS: But not everywhere, I mean there are also isolated nations in the third age. Let us read the beginning of paragraph 441.

[xiii] The Bergin and Fisch translation often omits Vico's own references to other sections of his text. This clause is an example, for it is present in the Italian, but not in the translation. We will not footnote all of the many cases when this occurs.

Mr. Reinken: "There is no worth in the contention of many scholars that, because the Hebrews and the Greeks give almost the same names to their vulgar letters the Greeks must have got theirs from the Hebrews. It is more reasonable that the Hebrews should have imitated the Greek nomenclature than visa versa. For it is universally agreed that from that Alexander—" (441)

LS: And so on. No, that's the point. So the Hebrew alphabet—that is, the vulgar letters of the Hebrews means alphabet—the Hebrew alphabet is derivative from the Greek. How much does this imply?[61] Were there Hebrew hieroglyphs originally? Hebrew mutatives. How could this be? They coincide with the election.

Now paragraph 442; we find perhaps some help here.

Mr. Reinken:

> These arguments confute the opinion of those who would have it that Cecrops the Egyptian brought vulgar letters to the Greeks. Another opinion, that Cadmus the Phoenician must have brought them from Egypt into Greece because he founded a city there and named it Thebes after the capital of the greatest Egyptian dynasty, will be refuted later by the principles of Poetic Geography, by which it will appear that the Greeks who went to Egypt called the Egyptian capital Thebes because it bore a resemblance to their native city of that name. And finally we understand why cautious critics, cited by an anonymous English writer on the uncertainty of the sciences, conclude from the too early date assigned to the Sancuniates that he never existed. We, accordingly, not to put him out of the world entirely—

LS: [LS laughs] How kind.

Mr. Reinken: "judge that he must be set in a later age, certainly after Homer. And to allow the Phoenicians priority over the Greeks in the invention of the so-called vulgar letters (not failing, however, to take into account that the Greeks had more genius than the Phoenicians), it has to be said that Sancuniates must have lived a little before Herodotus, who was called the father of Greek history, which he wrote in the vulgar speech. For Sancuniates was called the historian of truth; that is, a writer of what Varro in his division of times calls the historic time." (442)

LS: We will leave it at that. Now, just keeping in mind the question before about the Hebrew alphabet,[62] who is the first Hebrew historian, if we keep this in mind? According to the traditional view, of course, Moses. Of course Moses. But in the light of biblical criticism as it was made by Spinoza, a considerable time before Vico,[63] Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch. Who—it must have been someone, partly, at least, men writing . . . . In brief, I suggest that it is worth considering (although of course the basis here is much too small for that), whether the case of Moses is not similar to that of Sancuniates, in other words, that Vico would not deny the existence of Moses . . . but he would surely deny that these books under his name could have been written by Moses.

In paragraph 443—we cannot read everything—again, keep in mind this question: Since prose is originally the language of the plebs, is Hebrew prose—vulgar Hebrew, the language of the Hebrew plebs? That's going to be a question which would have to be considered.

Now in paragraph 444 it is stated as Mr. . . . made clear to us, words are by nature, not by convention, and this leads to more specific questions in the beginning of paragraph 445.

Mr. Reinken:

> There remains, however, the very great difficulty: How is it that there are as many different vulgar tongues as there are peoples? To solve it we must here establish this great truth: that, as the peoples have certainly by diversity of climates acquired different natures, from which have sprung as many different customs, so from their different natures and customs as many different languages have arisen. For by virtue of the aforesaid diversity of their natures they have regarded the same utilities or necessities of human life from different points of view, and there have thus arisen so many national customs, for the most part differing from one another and at times contrary to one another; so and not otherwise there have arisen as many different languages as there are nations. (444)

LS: Yes. Now is there an alternative to the explanation of the variety of languages? Of the origin of different languages?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but he refers however to the gentile nations, doesn't he?

Student: I don't know.

LS: Sure, this confusion . . . build the Tower of Babel sure, now . . . the clear exclusion makes me sure that was what he had in mind. This, in other words, is the only explanation, not the biblical one. The diversity of climate, natural diversity, the reason for the diversity of custom and of languages, we have discussed this before.

In the same paragraph he refers also to the fact that the names of the same kings are different in [holy history and in] profane history.[64] This is at least a reminder of the fact that Vico[65] remembers always biblical history,[66] [and] I think that no one can seriously doubt that any intelligent[67] [writer] or even unintelligent writer of former ages always knew the biblical history. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Isn't it possible that Vico could defend the view that history was thus and not otherwise because . . . doesn't it say in the Tower of Babel that people were scattered, and so then they would be affected by diverse climates?

LS: I have not looked up. You remember it . . . . He looked it up.

Mr. Butterworth: I did look it up, but I didn't check it before coming to class.

LS: You did check it.

Mr. Butterworth: I didn't, no.

LS: Well, I also didn't.[68]

Student: Why were they scattered?

LS: As punishment. Part of human pride.

Different Student: When they were building the Tower, they couldn't understand one another, though, so they scattered because they couldn't understand one another.

LS: That's correct. So I think there's really a clear contradiction between Vico's account and the biblical account. Yes, that's true. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Doesn't another point come up? He seems to say that somehow there is a significance to the difference among the languages—

LS: What does significance mean?

Mr. Reinken: Well, he says that the differences come from a difference in the point of view—

LS: But how does the difference in the point of view arise?

Mr. Reinken: He goes back to causes.

LS: Purely natural causes.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: So it doesn't . . . meaning is for life, for purposes or end. I mean people wouldn't admit that but . . . .

Mr. Reinken: Why must Vico assert that the differentiation of the languages has an intervening stage of a differentiation in points of view? Why not just say—

LS: No, the point of view is due, for example—why, say, a camera appears different to people who use it . . . and to people who do not use it for one reason or another. Take any other example. But the difference in point of view is itself created by mere natural necessities. In other words, the point of view is an intermediate stage, but it has no, it has no teleological . . . .

Mr. Reinken: No, I wasn't asserting that it had a teleological—I wanted to say that he did not absolutely need to bring in a differentiation of the point of views if he was merely trying to get from natural causes to the differentiation of languages—

LS: No, he must because this after all is a mental affair—words . . . . I mean, let me see.

In 446 he makes very clear (again Mr. . . . pointed that out) that the three languages are here presented as contemporaneous and not as successive. Yes, but I believe that the solution which Mr. . . . suggested is not tenable, because if these were such mute beings and if the vulgar language is intellectually superior to the hieroglyphic language, how could these impious giants, as it were—the plebs—have developed this more intellectual form of expression already at the beginning? This you didn't explain.

Student: I suggested another alternative, that is, that perhaps the three ages is not a strict rule—that, in fact you wouldn't have to worry about the languages—

LS: No. You see, Hegel's construction is, I must say, much more intelligible than Vico's[69]. Hegel expressed it as follows: [70]what[71] [Vico] calls the fathers, Hegel calls the masters, and what he calls the plebs, Hegel calls the slaves. Now what happens in the first stage? It's mere superiority, bodily superiority [that] makes one a master and one a slave. But that is not quite correct, Hegel implies, because they fight for life; and here not only[72] superiority or inferiority is important but also fear or non-fear. Now the fellow who gets afraid, gives in, submits, even if he is stronger than the other—[the one who][73] is more afraid becomes a slave, and the other [becomes] the master. What happens after this situation? In Hegel of course it's deliberately a construct. The master makes the slave work for him, and the master fights if necessary; otherwise, he enjoys the fruits of the work[74] of the slave. But the working is a more intellectual activity than what the master does because the slave has to understand the nature of the ground he works on or, you know, of any material on which he works. And so according to Hegel's conception, the higher development of man comes from the *lower* class, not from the masters. The master morality is a sterile thing; the whole development of civilization is the development of the working man. This,[75] by the way, is one very important link between Hegel and Marx, as you can see. [76]Hegel was not a socialist or any working class representative in his age, but[77] in other words, that would mean that the plebs, because of their subjection, because of the fact that they're compared to—develops this more intellectual language more or less simultaneously with the development of the . . . of the patricians.[78] [This is] surely proof that Vico's statement about the three stages must not be taken too literally. This is clear. In paragraph 447 there are some other points of connection with the Bible, in the middle,[79] when he speaks of the name Zeus.

Mr. Reinken: "By the Latins Jove was at first, from the roar of the thunder, called *Ious*; by the Greeks, from the whistle of the lightening, *Zeus*; by the Easterners, from the sound of burning fire, he must have been called *Ur*, whence came *Urim*, the power—" (447)

LS: *Urim* is a biblical instrument of divination,[80] and divinity means originally, according to Vico, divination. Anxiety[81] [about] the future creates the gods, and therefore that anxiety is taken care of by divination, by which he feels by the flight of birds or whatever it may be what the future will bring. So in other words, there is here a peculiar connection between pagan divination and biblical divination, according to Vico. A similar thing occurs also in the next paragraph, 448. Well, we cannot read the whole thing but it is also relevant for this point, to this question.

[82]In 461 we find another specimen of the irregularity of the development in different nations. The Greeks and the French passed from the—before the time—from the poetic age to the vulgar

age—you know, of the irregularity which explains certain agreements between French and Greek and which of course do not happen everywhere. 465.

Mr. Reinken: "Hebraists today are divided in their opinions upon the question whether Hebrew poetry is metrical or merely rhythmical. However, Josephus, Philo, Origen, and Eusebius stand as favoring meter, and (what is most to our present purpose) St. Jerome holds that the Book of Job, which is older than the books of Moses, was composed in heroic verse from the beginning of the third chapter to the end of the forty-second." (465)

LS: Ya. Ya, but the question is again: With what right can he use these Hebrew things in confirmation of his doctrine? This is a question, you know, all the time. We find similar things—let me see; yes, for example when he uses—let us take as an example . . . 467.

Mr. Reinken: "The Egyptians inscribed memorials of their dead in verse on columns called syringes, from *sir*, which means song—" (467)

LS: Which is a Hebrew word. And what does he mean by that? Does he mean that the Hebrews took it over from the Egyptians or vice versa? You know?[83] Because if he would say that they have taken it over from the Hebrews, maybe pagan wisdom is a decayed version of Hebrew wisdom, which he fights all the time. This is another . . . . He even traces the names Syrians and Assyrians to the same Hebrew word to prove that, of course without any basis. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: In paragraph 466, doesn't that run contrary to what he had said earlier, if he admits that the Arabs are ignorant of letters and they spoke nonetheless, that somehow language arises before letters?

LS: Yes, but perhaps that is hard to say; perhaps he means here[84] alphabetic letters and not other signs, therefore one cannot say this. Now—

Mr. Butterworth: But then we never—by that explanation we never know—

LS: Yes, sure; I mean, that is one of the difficulties which we have here. At the end of paragraph 470 he makes a statement[85] of a general kind.[86] Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Here let this important observation be made: that, if the peoples were established by laws, and if among all these peoples the laws were given in verse, and if the first things of these peoples were likewise preserved in verse, it necessarily follows that all the first peoples were poets." (470)

LS: Ya. But we have also seen from this point of view [that] poetry is the origin, the fundamental stratum of civilization; but we have also heard that religion performs this function. This is clearly compatible: poetry as he means it here, and religion as he means it, are identical.[87] "Theological poets" is a term which he constantly uses. At the beginning of 474.

Mr. Reinken: "To enumerate: (1) For the Chaldeans the sky was Jove in that they believed that they could foretell the future by the aspects and movements of the stars." (474)

LS: And then I do not want to go into this. He says here, "to enumerate," which he ordinarily doesn't do. And the numbers are of course the work of the translator, who wants to help you; if you look at the text there are no numbers. But if you count, there are seven: seven nations. And we have seen in the chronological table there are also seven nations. Now seven nations; this is a very familiar thing in the Bible, for example, in Deuteronomy 7:1 to 5, verses 1 to 5, the seven nations of Canaan, idolaters who ought to be destroyed for their idolatry; the conquest of the country.[88] Now of course the seven nations mentioned here are not the[89] Canaanite nations, obviously not, as these are all more civilized nations, with the possible exception of the old Germans and[90] the old Peruvians. It is interesting to read 481, because after the seven nations he turns immediately to the Hebrews.

Mr. Reinken: "But the Hebrews worshipped the true All Highest, who is above the heavens, in the enclosure of the tabernacle—" (481)

LS: Let us stop here in order to see what he says about the Persians in 481, no, in—where are the Persians? It's in 475. Read only the end.

Mr. Reinken: "For the Persians the sky was the temple of Jove; and Cyrus, because this was his religion, destroyed the temples built by the Greeks." (475)

LS: Ya. Now the question is: If you know nothing but these two statements about the Persians and the Hebrews, who is more rational? I mean, if Cyrus says—well, of course it's not Cyrus, but that doesn't make any difference; heaven is the temple of Jove—heaven—and hence the man-made temples are not worthy of Jove. Yes? And the Jews say God is above heaven, and yet they build a temple.

477 is also quite interesting because . . . is anti-Greek, as we have seen or the . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "To the Greeks Jove was likewise the sky. For they considered as of celestial origin the theorems and mathemata we have mentioned elsewhere [391]. These they believed to be divine or sublime things to be contemplated by the bodily eyes and to be observed (in the sense of obeyed) as laws of Jove. From mathemata comes the term mathematicians as applied in the Roman laws to the judicial astrologers." (477)

LS: By the *Roman laws*, not Greeks. As we will come to see when we see . . . his highest praises are reserved for the Greeks, especially for the Athenians. This we have to take into consideration. And then in 482 when he concludes he says—read the beginning of 482.

Mr. Reinken: "From the foregoing we gather that the first laws everywhere were the divine laws of Jove."

LS: "*Everywhere*," he says suddenly. I mean, i.e. not only amongst the Gentiles. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "So ancient in origin is the usage which has come down in the languages of many Christian nations of taking heaven for God." (482)

LS: Yes, and so on, and then he gives some more or less . . . examples. But the key point is: What about biblical usage? In the Bible, of course, God is sometimes referred to as being *in* heaven. Think of the Lord's Prayer, for example, not to go very far. So what should we make of that?

In 484 he speaks then of this fact that people take names and natures as the same thing. I explained this already before—this is of course not the true view, but the . . . view. Now the next paragraph we might read, 485.

Mr. Reinken: "Now, beginning all over again with family arms, in the returned barbarian times the nations again became mute in vulgar speech. For this reason no notice has come down to us of the Spanish, French, Italian, or other languages of those times, and Greek and Latin were known only by the priests—"

LS: Yes, in other words no knowledge has come down of the early forms of the Romance languages; of course it doesn't prove at all what he says . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> so that among the French *clerc* was used in the sense of a literate man, and on the other hand the Italians, as we see from a fine passage in Dante, used *laico*, "layman," for a man ignorant of letters. Indeed, even among the clergy ignorance was so dense that we read documents signed by bishops with the simple sign of the cross because they did not know how to write their own names. And even the learned prelates could write but little, as is shown by the diligent Father Mabillon in his work *De re diplomatica*, with its copperplate facsimilies of the signatures of bishops and archbishops to the acts of the councils of those barbarous days. They can be seen to have been written with letters more misshapen and clumsy than those of the most untaught simpleton of today. Yet for the most part the chancellors of the realms of Europe were such prelates, as was the case with the three Chancellor Archbishops of the Empire, one each for German, French, and Italian; and from these, because of the way they had of writing their letters with such irregular shapes, must have come the phrase "chancellor's script." (485)

LS: Yes, I read in Nicolini that is absolutely untrue. I was a very . . . it's entirely wrong. But the other thing, that generally speaking a *clerc* meant a literate, and a non-*clerc* an illiterate—that is true, of course. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Because of this scarcity of literate men an English law was decreed according to which a criminal under sentence of death who knew his letters would be spared as 'excelling in art'—'he who is excellent in art ought not to die.' Perhaps from this term 'lettered' later came to signify 'learned.'" (485)

LS: Ya. Now in other words, the illiteracy of the Middle Ages; and it was an age in which people were particularly apt to mistake names and natures in scholasticism.[91] Let us pursue this subject.[92] Then he[93] comes to speak about other medieval things, and especially the

names . . . the question of property, of the emergence of property. Yes. There is one passage—where labor preceded enslavement, i.e. in the first age (we come back to that) the patricians worked the soil themselves; only later when they conquered and subjugated the impious giants did slaves emerge. But, at the beginning of paragraph 487.

Mr. Reinken: "The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing—"

LS: From all this. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "is that in the time of mute nations the great need answered by ensigns was that for certainty of ownership."

LS: Yes, you recall here the expression again, "the times of mute nations," and they proceed—go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Later they became public ensigns in time of peace, and from these were derived the medals, which, with the introduction warfare, were found suitable for military insignia." (487)

LS: So in a way muteness precedes peace, and peace precedes war; war meaning here of course public war. 489.

Mr. Reinken: "The name *Ious*, Jove, when contracted to *ius*, must have meant first of all the fat of the victims owed to Jove, as we have said above. Similarly in the returned barbarism the term 'canon' was applied both to ecclesiastical law and to the payment made to the fief holder to his immediate master; perhaps because the first fiefs were introduced by the ecclesiastics, who, not being able to cultivate them themselves, gave the fields of the Church to others to till." (489)

LS: I just wonder whether he doesn't mean a bit more than canon law and payment to the prelates. [It is] a well known topic in the early modern ages that the clergy ruled the western world to their benefit—that the canon law served the payment of the . . . . 490 we must read.

Mr. Reinken:

> That truth of rational metaphysics concerning the omnipresence of God, which had been taken in the false sense of poetic metaphysics: . . . *Iovis omnia plena*, "all things are full of Jove," conferred human authority on those giants who had occupied the first empty lands of the world in the same sense of ownership. In Roman law this was certainly called *ius optimum*, but its original meaning was quite different from that in which it was used in later times. For it had at first the sense defined by Cicero in a golden passage in his orations: "ownership of real estate subject to no encumbrance, private or public." This *ius* was called *optimum* in the sense of strongest, as not having been weakened by any extraneous encumbrance. For right was reckoned by strength in the first times of the world, as we shall see. This ownership must have belonged to the fathers in the family-state, and was consequently the natural ownership which had to precede the civil. (490)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Here again the origin of property. It is not quite clear: Does it originate in occupation or in force? That is a great question. But one could assume that force was not needed because everything was empty. But on the other hand, the relation to force is very strange. Occupation is in accordance with rational metaphysics, he says. Force, power, would be in accordance with some other doctrine. Now in Spinoza's doctrine, the right, the original right is the right of the strongest, and [for Spinoza] this is the right[94] from the sheer power of God, and therefore the sheer force of every being. [In] 494 there is another criticism here of the—no, this I only know, that in paragraph 491 he speaks of the number three in Greek mythology applied to Jove, Neptune, and Cerberus, and then the three princes of natural right in 493. And in paragraph 492, I see now that he speaks of the "third place"; it's the third place of this book, namely of his original work, of the original form of the *New Science*. Paragraph 494. Now the heading is of some interest, of the next chapter—

Mr. Reinken: "Final Corollaries Concerning the Logic of the Learned."

LS: "Of the *Learned*," as distinguished from the logic with which . . . poetic logic. Now let us read the first part, paragraph 494.

Mr. Reinken: "The results so far reached by the aid of this poetic logic concerning the origins of languages do justice to their first creators. They were rightly regarded as sages in all subsequent times because they gave natural and proper names to things, so that, as we saw above, among the Greeks and Latins name and nature meant the same thing." (494)

LS: What do we make of this paragraph? The thesis that they[95] identified names and natures we knew already before; but he says here something else, that they were—how were these authors called? They are called wise. Now what did we learn about their wisdom before, the wisdom of these early men, who created the first languages and letters? They were extremely stupid, so I mean this seems to be a clear case of irony on the part of Vico. Let us read also paragraph 497.

Mr. Reinken: "And first it began to hew out topics, which is an art of regulating well the primary operation of our mind by noting the commonplaces that must all be run over in order to know all there is in a thing that one desires to know well, that is, completely." (497)

LS: Yes. This again ascribed to this . . . it only concerns what I said before. The heading of this chapter—we will speak later on of the philosophers in this chapter, as you will see, but it is strange that this is important. Let us read the beginning of 498.

Mr. Reinken: "Providence gave good guidance to human affairs when it aroused human minds first to topics rather than to criticism, for acquaintance with things must come before judgment of them. Topics has the function of making minds inventive, as criticism as that of making them exact. And in those first times all things necessary to human life had to be invented, and invention is the property of genius." (498)

LS: Yes, there is also a difficulty when they had such extremely narrow and poor minds, as they were said to have. For example, just in case you have forgotten it, paragraph 424, at the end.

Mr. Reinken: "But to undeveloped minds it suffices to present a—"

LS: To "narrow," "short" minds. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "it suffices to present a single likeness in order to persuade them; as, by a single fable of the sort invented by Aesop, the worthy Menenius Agrippa reduced the rebellious Roman plebs to obedience." (424)

LS: Yes. These short minds were the inventors of the highest language, i.e. of the alphabetic language. Menenius Agrippa will come back to us in the next chapter. Let us read, in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> This history of human ideas is strikingly confirmed by the history of philosophy itself. For the first kind of crude philosophy used by men was *autopsia*, or the evidence of the senses. (It was later made use of by Epicurus, for he, as a philosopher of the senses, was satisfied with the mere exhibition of things to the evidence of the senses.) And the senses of the first poetic nations were extremely lively, as we have seen in the *Origins of poetry*.[xiv] Then came Aesop, or the moral philosophers whom we would call vulgar. (As we have noted above Aesop preceded the Seven Sages of Greece.) Aesop taught by example, and since he lived in what was still the poetic age, he took his examples from fictitious similitudes. (The good Menenius Agrippa used once such to reduce the rebellious Roman plebs to obedience.) (499)

LS: Yes, which presupposes an immense stupidity on the part of the Roman plebs; you remember the case, we discussed it, that the patricians are the stomach, and the stomach gets everything, for the benefit of the other parts. Yes. Good.

Mr. Reinken: "An example of this sort, or better still a true one, is even now more persuasive to the ignorant crowd than the most impeccable reasoning from maxims."

LS: Yes, now let us read only the end, then, where he speaks of Aristotle and Zeno.

Mr. Reinken: "Then came Aristotle and Zeno. The former taught the syllogism, a method which displays the universals in their particulars rather than putting together the particulars to form universals. The latter taught the sorites, which, like the method of modern philosophers, makes minds subtle, but not sharp." (499)

LS: "Modern" does not mean now what we mean by modern. You know, we would think of modern—we would . . . exactly of Bacon, and—but moderns are those who are still in control of the universities more or less at that time. Yes?

[xiv] Mr. Reinken takes this clause from the Italian edition; it is not present in the Bergin and Fisch translation.

Mr. Reinken: "Neither of them yielded anything else of note to the advantage of the human race. Hence with great reason Bacon, great alike as philosopher and statesman, proposes, commends, and illustrates the inductive method in his [*Novum*] *Organum*, and is still followed by the English with great profit in experimental philosophy." (499)

LS: Yes. This shows his preferences. Now Menenius Agrippa, yes, he comes in truly in time, because I think we have to connect this with the illiteracy of the Middle Ages, of which he had spoken in paragraph 485, and [to] the whole argument of what the canon[s] are in 489. The Middle Ages: returned barbarism, plebs completely subjugated, and in which it was possible for a good Menenius Agrippa again to keep the plebs in its place. Now it is not necessary to say that paragraph 499, especially the end of it, contradicts the praise of antiquity, and especially of the most ancient antiquity of which we have seen so many traces in the book? And we understand now why he has this manifestly ironical passage: he's truly with the moderns, of the moderns, Bacon and Newton, we have seen. And one way of concealing it, indicating it, is to take the side of the ancients, and then—but the logic that old things are good leads inevitably to "the oldest is the best." Now the oldest were these savage fellows whom he called, therefore, in this connection, the wisest. Let us also see the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "This history of human ideas clearly convicts of their common error all those who, under the influence of their mistaken popular belief in the superlative wisdom of the ancients, have held that Minos, the first lawgiver of the Gentile nations, Theseus at Athens, Lycurgus at Sparta, and Romulus and other Kings at Rome established universal laws. For the most—"

LS: And here, by the way, it's clear that the overestimation of the ancients in the two senses of the ancient philosophers, but more importantly of the ancient legislators and originators. Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For the most ancient laws, we observe, were conceived as commanding or forbidding one individual alone; only later were they given general application (so incapable of universals were the first peoples!); and furthermore—" (500)

LS: And I think this exclamation mark which we have here is probably in the original. I mean I cannot imagine that a serious scholar like Nicolini would insert an exclamation mark there. In other words, Vico himself[96] points it out the absurdity of the belief that these early men were capable of any universals except those universals which they had, poetic universals—using "Solon," let me say, proper names for any Legislator. Yes, or . . . for any plebeian slave who sees through his masters, because they don't have universals. Good.

Mr. Reinken: "And furthermore, they were not conceived at all before the acts occurred that made them necessary. The law of Tullus Hostilius in the case against Horatius is nothing else but the penalty decreed by the duumvirs, appointed for that purpose by the king, against the illustrious culprit. Livy calls it *lex horrendi carminis*; it is one of the laws which Draco wrote in blood, and sacred history calls them *leges sanguinis*—" (500)

LS: You see again the reference to that—fundamentally, the same thing was also true of the Hebrews. Yes. And[97] the true principles[98] are at the end of the chapter: one must judge by laws and not by examples, by universal laws known beforehand and not after the action has taken place, to establish a punishment for the case which is then likely to be, because [if] it is made on the spur of the moment, when everyone is angry at the . . . [it] is bound to be a bloody judgment. That means these two things go together. Well, can we say—what is the English expression? To make an example, what is the English—

Student: To make an example of someone.

LS: Pardon? No, no, no.

Student: To make an example—

LS: To make an example; it means of course always [LS laughs] a particularly harsh punishment. I mean,[99] the only thing to do in a case is [to] judge, and it is judged in a bloody manner; [they][100] [belong] together. That's early law. And Vico says, of course, against all simple critics of early law, [that] it could not have been different. [It is] unfair of these people to accuse them of cruelty. They couldn't have acted differently, but of course it was a consequence of their stupidity, and we who are no longer stupid must not do that, yes? And—well, of course, I mean when you take the Bible, I'm sure he would say there is no prohibition against murder prior to Cain's slaying of Abel. Cain is punished, and in the punishment is an example in this sense . . . law. And he would have found other examples in the Old Testament, I'm sure, like the first violation of the Sabbath. Originally [there] was no pre-existing law indicating clearly what should be done . . . . Sabbath was established, but no penal law stating clearly the punishment for that. I mean, these rules which come from Roman law—no crime without law, *nullum crimen sine lege*, and no punishment without law, *nulla poena sine lege*[101]—belong to a very highly developed law and legal procedure. Yes?

Student: . . . procedural law. Would there be no procedure in previous times, when the law wasn't general?

LS: Yes. Yes. But I think for Vico the key point is the connection between no laws, no universal laws because no universal concepts; for example, to prohibit murder presupposes naturally the universal concept "murder." But if there are no universal concepts—which is an untenable assumption of Vico, I believe, but following his reasoning—if there are no universal concepts, there cannot be laws; and there can only be "A killed B." Even how "killed" would be possible [is a question], because it is in itself a universal. I mean, in other words, Vico's theory of language is of course impossible, but if we accept it for one moment and admit that it might have some element of truth—that a certain kind of[102] [universal] would have been impossible for very early man—it would follow (and the fact is I think true) that a legal code and[103] law properly understood presupposes some generalization; and probably men at the beginning, before laws of this kind were developed, did not have them. But on the other hand, they surely have customs, right?—[104]and the customs[105] have such a general character, yes? What one is supposed to do—anyone; [106]I don't believe that anyone today would maintain Vico's doctrine. But the key point for him, on the basis of the facts as he saw them, is this: in the early stage there were no laws, at

least no penal laws proper, but people reacted toward deviations from custom as it occurred on the spur of the moment, i.e. passionately, and therefore savagely; and the civilized way of doing that concerned—in this respect especially by the Romans, is[107] to act on the principle [that] one must judge on the basis of laws and not . . . . Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: When you used the . . . did you mention the thing we'd have to look into before we could . . . the last part criticizing Vico? There's one thing that you didn't mention . . . etymology . . . .

LS: Ya, sure, and—

Mr. Butterworth: And we passed over that—

LS: Oh,[108] I omitted innumerable things. But this thing especially, I believe—[109]I did not think of it as worth mentioning for one reason which you can trace to a high degree of laziness. What I saw from Nicolini's commentary[110] is in these matters quite good. He has really taken the trouble to review all the relevant literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth century and beyond, even back, about this etymology. Well, there are certain works which . . . like what we know from Varro and of course . . . . But there are so many learned books in the sixteenth and seventeenth[111] [centuries], this is an abyss; I mean, you would have to invest about five years, I imagine, to go through these things. So I think[112] I would be perfectly satisfied in this respect with accepting Nicolini, i.e. that there are[113] quite a few of his etymologies which sound very fanciful [that] were not made by him but were part of the literature; but in some cases [LS laughs] which are particularly fanciful, they are invariably Vico's constructions in order to make the facts fit his theory—another familiar thing.

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Yes, because—well, I cannot judge. I must say it has another reason: if someone says today: This is the etymology, yes? [Or]: This is the latest result of research, I would not be absolutely certain that I could trust that, because etymologists change their minds from generation to generation, and it is very, very hard to know—

Mr. Butterworth: So you don't think that this affects his argument, then?

LS: Not fundamentally. I mean, not fundamentally. But the other points which I mentioned, which can be done, and are relatively simple to do, would be to have, say, a complete statistics of his quotations; I mean both quotations and mentions of authors. For example, it would be truly interesting to have together all his references to the three princes. Yes? And biblical quotations, which are very rare, as we have seen; and also some other things, an example of which occurred last time, of which I had not thought before. Do you remember what it was?

Student: The "golden" passages.

LS: Yes, which passages are singled out as "golden" would be, surely. Some examples indicating the peculiar care of Vico will come out next time. But today we had this little thing,

and that's to enumerate[114] [things], which I believe he never did before, and then he enumerates just seven things, and this I found at least worth noting; I mean whether it is sufficient to . . . I cannot yet say. Yes, sure. But generally speaking, I believe the most important things for understanding an author [are] what you find within the covers of the book. Another point, which of course [would be absolutely necessary] for [an] adequate and perfect understanding, is[115] to study the earlier works. Now Nicolini in his commentary gives all references I suppose which he could[116] [determine] from the earlier works, but these are naturally always snippets. You have to study these earlier works each by itself, and to get out its overall message, and this—we limited ourselves to the final version of the *New Science* for the simple practical reason that it is the only one which is accessible in a paperback; and we have a better reason in addition, and that [is that] it's truly the final version of Vico according to his own declaration. Therefore it truly deserves primary consideration. But it would be quite interesting, because when you read some presentations of Vico's doctrine, for example in Croce's work, the *verum-factum* distinction: we understand as true only what we have made. Now here in this work, as far as I've seen hitherto, this is a relatively minor thing. Apparently in the earlier versions this must have been elaborated much more; and come to think of it, I do not find it so terribly important as I always thought on the basis of what I had read in the literature about Vico, because in a strict sense we did not make them, they were made in us by natural necessity. Yes. Now next time Mr. Gray will read his paper.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "what."
[2] Deleted "is."
[3] Deleted "to."
[4] Deleted "There is."
[5] Moved "this" and deleted "is."
[6] Deleted "which is the one—."
[7] Deleted "of course."
[8] Deleted "they are—."
[9] Deleted "that."
[10] Deleted "to be."
[11] Moved "said."
[12] Deleted "—propel."
[13] Deleted "is."
[14] Deleted "that they were—."
[15] Deleted "is not."
[16] Deleted "—the name."
[17] Deleted, "He."
[18] Deleted "I.e. in the—."
[19] Deleted "was."
[20] Deleted "this only."
[21] Moved "could."
[22] Deleted "what."
[23] Moved, "of Troeltsch."
[24] Deleted "as."
[25] Deleted "developed—."
[26] Deleted "because."
[27] Deleted "where we see—."
[28] Deleted "that."
[29] Deleted "civil equity.'
[30] Deleted "that Vico is very short—I mean."

[31] Deleted “this.”
[32] Deleted: “**LS**: Pardon? **Student**: [inaudible words]”
[33] Deleted “that—.”
[34] Deleted “I mean we—.”
[35] Deleted “takes—.”
[36] Deleted “seriously.”
[37] Deleted “meant.”
[38] Deleted “Vico—.”
[39] Deleted “don’t.”
[40] Deleted “Vico—.”
[41] Deleted “Machiavelli speaks three times, I believe—no,.”
[42] Deleted “I do not—.”
[43] Deleted “to say—.”
[44] Deleted “history—.”
[45] Deleted “And there is one—.”
[46] Deleted “this.”
[47] Deleted “he goes on.”
[48] Deleted “and from—.”
[49] Deleted “Of Islam.”
[50] Deleted “And now—.”
[51] Deleted “This gives unity to his whole work..”
[52] Deleted “that.”
[53] Deleted “from each other.”
[54] Deleted “So the first—.”
[55] Deleted “There is another point which we.”
[56] Deleted “the.”
[57] Deleted “refers merely—.”
[58] Deleted “there is—.”
[59] Deleted “of” and “the,” and moved “Vico.”
[60] Changed from: “Now what Feuerbach in the nineteenth century in his *Essence of Religion* is, in a way, a restatement of that.”
[61] Deleted “How much does this imply?”
[62] Deleted “what was that—.”
[63] Deleted “Moses is not.”
[64] Changed from: “In the same paragraph he refers also to the fact that the names of the same kings are called in one way in the holy history are read in a different way in profane history.”
[65] Deleted “is always—.”
[66] Deleted “which.”
[67] Deleted “writing.”
[68] Deleted “I also didn’t.”
[69] Deleted “one.”
[70] Deleted “the original.”
[71] Deleted “he.”
[72] Deleted “both.”
[73] Deleted “that.”
[74] Deleted “of the work."
[75] Deleted “is.”
[76] Deleted “I doubt.”
[77] Deleted “in there— This would be—."
[78] Deleted “But this is not—we have no right to assume that—."
[79] Deleted “you.”
[80] Deleted “Now Zeus is—.”
[81] Deleted “of.”
[82] Deleted “We cannot read everything, yes.”
[83] Deleted “And.”
[84] Deleted “letters—.”

[85] Deleted “about—.”
[86] Deleted “Do you have a match with you? Forgive me.”
[87] Deleted “The.”
[88] Deleted “This is—.”
[89] Deleted “seven nations—.”
[90] Deleted “the Peruvians.”
[91] Deleted “We will—.”
[92] Deleted “Now this is—.”
[93] Deleted “speaks.”
[94] Deleted “by” and moved “Spinoza.”
[95] Deleted “made names.”
[96] Deleted “says—.”
[97] Deleted “we can—and.”
[98] Deleted “that.”
[99] Deleted “the two things that—.”
[100] Deleted “belongs.”
[101] Deleted “are of course—.”
[102] Deleted “universals.”
[103] Deleted “a legal—.”
[104] Deleted “customs.”
[105] Deleted “are—.”
[106] Deleted “to that extent you may.”
[107] Deleted “to have.”
[108] Deleted “I mentioned—.”
[109] Deleted “I did not mention it—.”
[110] Deleted “which.”
[111] Deleted “century.”
[112] Deleted “I would simply—.”
[113] Deleted “some—.”
[114] Deleted “them.”
[115] Deleted “that it” and moved “would be absolutely necessary.”
[116] Deleted “think.”

Session 10: October 30, 1964

[This transcript begins some six minutes into the recording, at 6:15. The preceding material cannot be transcribed consistently.]

Leo Strauss: No. The physics—I mean, before he comes to physics he discovers the . . . *cogito*, that is the soul, and god. The *Meditations* are called *Meditations on First Philosophy*—first philosophy was an Aristotelian term for what later on came to be called metaphysics . . . . Metaphysics precedes all of the sciences. And here in Vico we have this order: metaphysics comes first; and then comes logic; and then comes the practical sciences, morals, economics, and politics;[1] and[2] only then physics, in section 6,[i] and to which cosmography, astronomy, chronology, and geography are appended. But physics comes much later, and of course it has to come later because, as we have seen, physics according to Vico's official teaching is knowledge of what men cannot have made, [of what] only God has made and of which . . . lower status than mathematics, surely, and—or logic and the practical sciences, which deal with things which man has made. So this bears repeating: the fact that he begins with moral philosophy and goes on from there to ethics and politics . . . .

There is one . . . which I had to . . . yesterday at a luncheon from an up-to-date political scientist, which I think is very pertinent to what we are discussing. Perhaps some of you know the fact (I did not know) that during the war, on some small island in the Pacific where [there were] men with very brutish notions in their head, and then there appeared American landing boats and this kind of thing . . . . And—you know it?

Student: I know one version of it, where the Marines landed on the island and . . . .

LS: And?

Student: And there was a . . . ruined the site.

LS: Yes, well, I didn't hear another version than this, that the complete system of beliefs and customs was completely destroyed. But the version which I heard is this: that they regarded these Americans as the gods . . . . And then they . . . because they got everything they needed now from these new gods, and no longer from the old ones. And the trouble was that these new gods at a certain time left [laughter], and then they were worse off than they were before. But I drew one inference from it which . . . *New Science*, namely, that it proves of course the rationality of . . . . I mean, these new gods proved to be much more effective than the old ones, and therefore they abandoned them; and therefore [they][3] [made] this mistake:[4] [they] didn't consider that they might leave again. That any one of us would have . . . because they had no previous experience of these things. And in other words, I admire their rationality, and I think that it in a way speaks against peoples' assumption [that] they are so thoroughly irrational . . . . Yes. . . .

Student: There is. I just heard the story, I . . . .

LS: . . . .

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[i] Of Book 2 of the *New Science.*

Student: . . . set up mock replicas of cargo planes in the hope of luring them down . . . ancestors' planes . . . .

LS: I can only say it is a perfectly rational thinking on the basis of correspondences. That's another matter. But the thinking is itself . . . . And as I say, who of us can boast that he would adopt better premises on the basis of their previous experiences? Now let us turn then to this new section.

[5]Let us consider . . . [6]poetic morals; poetical means of course here always . . . i.e. primitive morals. Yes. And here also the origins of[7] the vulgar virtue; that is of some importance, as we'll see later. Now perhaps we [should] read the first paragraph, 502.

Mr. Reinken: "The metaphysics of the philosophers, by means of the idea of God, fulfills its first task, that of clarifying the human mind, which needs logic so that with clear and distinct ideas it may form its conclusions, and descend therewith to cleanse the heart of man with morality."

LS: So in other words, morality follows after first metaphysics and[8] logic, and . . . the morality. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Just so the metaphysics of the poet giants, who had warred against heaven in their atheism, vanquished them with the terror of Jove, whom they feared as the wielder of the thunderbolt." (502)

LS: Yes, let us stop here. Now[9] the metaphysics of the philosophers uses the idea of God and then goes over to the moral teaching. The metaphysics of the poets, who are . . . who are atheists, they are then converted by the terrible idea of Jove, as he says immediately afterward, which is simultaneous—you see, when he says: "they defeated them with the terror of Jove, whom they apprehended . . . ."[ii] Yes? They apprehended by the terror of Jove, which terror is simultaneous with the apprehension of . . . . The cognitive element here is apprehension of the lightning; that corresponds to the metaphysics, to the metaphysics of the philosophers.[10] There is of course no parallel in the early times to the logic proper, as we see here. They have only their kind of metaphysics, and their kind of morals, and no logic here. The pertinent thought is the relation of metaphysics to logic. Is metaphysics necessary? I refer you to our discussion of paragraph 343 to 346.[iii] Now in the next paragraph he makes again clear the . . . . "The poetic morality."

Mr. Reinken: "began with piety, which was ordained by providence to found the nations, for among them all piety is proverbially held to be the mother—" (503)

LS: By "proverbially," *volgarmente*: vulgarly. It can also mean "proverbially," it can also have . . . . Yes, "the mother of all virtues." . . . the mother of all vulgar virtues. He makes clear also in this paragraph that philosophy is not productive of any virtue. I think it must be in this paragraph. Is it not here?

[ii] Presumably Strauss's translation.

[iii] This discussion occurs toward the end of session 7.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, I see, whereas philosophy is . . . good for reasoning about morality. So philosophy is not productive of any virtue. And the core of piety, that is clear from the paragraph, is fear. At the end of this paragraph, "And this remains an eternal."

Mr. Reinken: "Hence came the eternal property of all nations—"

LS: You see of all nations . . . all nations. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "that piety is instilled in children by the fear of some divinity." (503)

LS: Yes. True . . . . Good. Now, in the next paragraph, the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Moral virtue began, as it must, with effort."

LS: Yes, *conatus*, this is the same term. *Conatus*, which can mean endeavor. Hobbes . . . . by endeavor. The incipient motion, the beginning of the motion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For the giants, confined under the mountains by the frightful religion of the thunderbolts, learned to restrain—"

LS: So what does this mean? What—in . . . language? Out of fear of the lightning, they hid in the caves. Yes? That is . . . . Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "to restrain their bestial habit of wandering wild through the great forest of the earth, and acquired the contrary custom of remaining hidden and settled in their fields. Hence they later became the founders of the nations and the lords of the first commonwealths, as we have indicated above and as we shall set forth more fully further on." (504)

LS: How often has he said that, I wonder? . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This has been preserved by vulgar tradition as one of the great benefits conferred on the human race by heaven when it reigned on earth through the religion of the auspices. And hence came Jove's title of stayer or establisher, as we have said above. And with this effort likewise the virtue of moderation began—" (503)

LS: Oh no, it shouldn't say moderation.[iv] *Virtù dell'animo*, the virtue of the mind, let one say that . . . . loose translation of *animo*, but the most . . . . *Animo* from Latin *animus*, which [is] distinguished from *anima*, the soul. One should never . . . . But mind is of course . . . because *animo* means much more than the emotional life of men.

Student: Spirit.

[iv] "The virtue of moderation" must be Mr. Reinken's own translation. The Bergin and Fisch translation reads "the virtue of the spirit."

LS: What? Spirit, you can say, yes; if you do not understand the meaning of spirit you . . . . Otherwise, it would be alright. Now which word would do, which common English word would do, to bring out . . . . Not mind—I mean, not the soul and not the spirit . . . .

Student: . . . . [11]

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . passions. Yes.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, temper . . . . I used this complicated . . . when I worked on Machiavelli: will, temper, and I had a third one—I forgot it—to bring that out, which cannot be well brought out . . . English term. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, *mente* is mind. But the question is this. English is neither Italian nor Latin; we have to find an English equivalent . . . simply repeat the Italian or Latin term. Now let us see, there is another term which comes—yes, but here of course it does mean something like temperance in this particular context. Yes? But the term itself doesn't mean it. Now read the sentence again, please.

Mr. Reinken:

> With this effort likewise the virtue of temperance began to show itself among them, restraining their bestial lust from finding its satisfaction in the sight of heaven, of which they had a mortal terror. So it came about that each of them would drag one woman into his cave and would keep her there in perpetual company for the duration of their lives. Thus the act of human love was performed under cover, in hiding, that is to say, in shame; and they began to feel that sense of shame which Socrates described as the color of virtue. (504)

LS: This is something else, you know. They had moral virtue, then they had virtue of temper, and then we have color of virtue, which is—surely in no case do we have here moral virtue proper; that's absolutely impossible, and that is indicated by the heading of the whole section.[v] This is only the basis out of which moral virtue will develop. We must never forget the great axiom: Private vices; public, common good benefit.[12] These virtues which come first are not general virtues but kinds of vices or, more generally stated, modified passions of some sort. And here the key passion is fear, the superstition . . . . Yes.

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[v] "Poetic Morals and the Origins of the Vulgar Virtues Taught by Religion through the Institution of Matrimony."

In 507, he speaks near the beginning—please read only of the beginning, "Of this most ancient origin." I mean, you have seen how he believes that matrimony came into being.[13] It is of course a very poor explanation, by the way . . . . and then after the lightning was over . . . [laughter], I mean, come to think of it. But here we are. But he of course[14] was followed by many . . . nineteenth century—including, by the way, Freud; when you read his explanation of how early moral notions emerged, it is as far-fetched and as unreasonable as this. Good. But we know that now, and we have to be satisfied with it for the time being. Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "From this most ancient origin of marriage came the custom by which women enter the families and houses of the men they marry. This natural custom of the gentile nations was preserved by the Romans—" (507)

LS: Now let us stop here. "Natural custom of the gentiles." Yes. Why is it natural? Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Yes, because of its general . . . . This alone proves this . . . . You remember what we said last time about climate, because in different climates . . . differently.[15] If something is general, it is surely natural. Yes. But not everything natural is universal.

Mr. Reinken: But it is natural because its origin—the custom is there at the beginning, the lightning; at the striking of the lighting.

LS: Yes, but this lightning of course is an inference,[16] that there hadn't been any[17] [lightning] for centuries and therefore—I mean [it's] an assumption which one may or may not accept.

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: No, I think the evidence which he has for the assumption . . . certain institutions, and . . . say, among Mexicans, and among Chinese, and among Egyptians. And then he says: You find them everywhere, and since there can't be any . . . it must have emerged in each case by itself. It must be a universal custom and . . . . This only as a reminder of what we have—

We come now to—if I omit anything, Mr. Gray, which you regard as important, you must stop me.

In paragraph 510 we find something about the origin of property again.

Mr. Reinken: "The third solemnity—also preserved by the Romans—was a certain show of force in taking a wife, recalling the real violence with which the giants dragged the first wives into their caves. And by analogy with the first lands which the giants had occupied by taking physical possession of them, properly wedded wives were said to be *manucaptae*, 'taken by force.'" (510)

LS: Yes, the usage . . . of carrying the bride into the house, is this not also meant to be a show of force? Is it not underlined there? I do not know. What is the usual explanation given? . . . . [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: There are some things . . . .

Student: . . . sign of the ability of the husband . . . .

LS: I see. Carry her gently through life, I see. Yes. Now in the next paragraph, we see again that the first marriages were incestuous, and that is proven by the fact that Juno is the sister and wife of Jove.[18] We must never forget that this incest[19] is according to Vico part of natural right, of course. I mean the traditional . . . is the natural right of a later stage, but the first natural right includes the permission of incest.

In paragraph 513 we find the reference to the state of nature. Let us read first the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Juno is called *jugalis*, 'of the yoke,' with reference to the yoke of solemn matrimony, for which it was called *conjugium* and the married pair *conjuges*. She is also known as Lucina, who brings the offspring into the light; not natural light, for that is shared by the offspring of slaves, but the civil light by reason of which the nobles are called illustrious."

LS: Ya, let us keep in mind this distinction between the civil and the natural because later on, at the end of the paragraph, where he refers to the state of nature, when—

Mr. Reinken: "All of which proves only too conclusively the monarchic power that the fathers had had over their families in the state of nature." (513)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So the state of nature—but this state of nature includes apparently already this civil light as distinguished from the natural light. Namely, the distinction between the *patri*, the fathers, and the outsiders, or the . . . distinction between the pious giants and the impious giants. The impious giants were . . . barbaric stage and are atheists, and the pious giants who believed in gods like Jupiter. So what then does "state of nature" mean? Not the same of course [as] what it means in Hobbes, because in Hobbes the state of nature wouldn't be any—this would seem . . . . The state of nature is not strictly natural, this much is clear, because the distinction of . . . . But it has one thing, of course, in common with Hobbes' and with Locke's state of nature: it is pre-political. Only when the fathers assemble do we reach the political stage. This might be a good occasion for us[20] [to look] at all references to the state of nature. Now unfortunately I have not been very watchful and have to depend on luck. Now the first reference [21]which I could find occurs in paragraph 13. Will you turn to that please? This is one of the things[22] which we should have collected from the beginning . . . . Good. Paragraph 13, the second sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "For it will be found that the races, first of Ham, then of Japheth, and finally of Shem, without the religion of their father Noah, which they had repudiated (and which alone, in what was then the state of nature, could have held them by marriages in a society of families)—" (13)

LS: Here[23] you have the "then" state of nature, which means it is a kind of state of nature;[24] it is not true of the state of nature in general. Now a bit later he speaks then of a state of beasts. Yes? Read a bit further on in that same paragraph. And later on in the paragraph he speaks *in quel primo stato de cose umani*, in that first state of human things.[25] Now in the "then" state of nature—well, state of nature of course in the traditional Christian meaning, a state of corrupt nature after the Fall, obviously. To that extent the emphasis here is not on pre-political, although it is implied. May I remind those of you who do not know that according to the traditional Christian meaning, the state of nature has nothing to do with pre-political. The state of nature is distinct from the state of the law, i.e. the Mosaic law, and the state of grace. Therefore the pagans, say, the Mexicans, the original Mexicans, and Inca, they lived in a state of nature. Not in spite of the fact that they lived in civil society; one could almost say because of it, but they did not have any inkling of the divine law nor of grace. That was the point. That the state of nature took on the meaning of pre-political is the Hobbean change. And here there is a kind of transition in the usage[26] in paragraph 13.

The next passage of which I know is 135.

Mr. Reinken: "In view of the fact that the human race—"

LS: 134.

Mr. Reinken: Oh. "Things do not settle or endure out of their natural order." (134)

LS: Ya. Natural state. This one can say is the old Aristotelian meaning. Of course in the Greek there is no word for a state of nature . . . . Aristotle would simply say *kata physin*, according to nature. But in the translations of Aristotle, *status naturalis* occurs with this meaning: the natural state, the complete and healthy state of the being, is the natural state. How about 165?

Mr. Reinken: "Sacred history is more ancient than all the most ancient profane histories that have come down to us, for it narrates in great detail and over a period of more than eight hundred years the state of nature under the patriarchs—"

LS: Or?

Mr. Reinken: "that is, the state of the families." (165)

LS: Here we are: pre-political state. And here you see it doesn't make any difference whether there are gentiles or Jews. The state of nature is a prepolitical state wherever it occurs. 257.

Mr. Reinken: "The families cannot have taken their name, in keeping with their origin, from anything but these *famuli* of the fathers in the then state of nature."

LS: The "then" state, right? Here it is different: there must be another state of nature apart from that. What could this mean? You know this is prepolitical, of course. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: This is the same kind of thing as . . . 113, that there's a first state of nature, and then after the changes there's another state of nature.

LS: I see. In other words, you believe we could have to distinguish from the age in which there are only impious giants, and then in which there were both. That's a possibility, but for another occasion. But it could of course also mean something else, along the lines of Spinoza's criticism of Hobbes: that men live always in a state of nature, meaning of course not in a pre-political state, that's not what he means, but he meant the fundamental fact that man as a natural being [is] always exposed to natural influences and motivated by them, so that the man-made customs themselves [are] expressions of human nature.[27] In other words, the distinction between the natural state and the civil state is ultimately not important. I don't remember now the exact passage[28] [in which] Spinoza makes this criticism of Hobbes. Either in a letter or a note in the *Theological-Political Treatise*; I don't remember that.

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . Yes. 521, beginning. This—I have three more; there are four references to the state of nature. Did you say that?

Student: I said three.

LS: Ah. Well, let us see whether I was right or whether I counted wrong. 521, beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "As regards the first part, the heroic fathers, as we noted in the axioms, must have been, in the state called that of nature—" (521)

LS: You see, here he makes clear that this is a way of speaking which is not necessarily the best one. 552 beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Philologians and philosophers have commonly supposed that the families in the so-called state of nature—" (522)

LS: Same. 557.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus began the clienteles and the first intimations of the fiefs, of which we shall have much to say later."

LS: That is a bit later, when he comes to speak of Arabia.

Mr. Reinken: "They are still found in great numbers in Arabia, as they were once in Egypt; and in the West Indies the greater part were found in this state of nature—"

LS: "In such a state of nature." Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "to be governed by such families, surrounded by slaves in such numbers as to cause Charles V, king of Spain, to consider imposing restrictive measures. It must have been

with a family such as these that Abraham made war against the gentile kings; and his servants who aided him are called by a name much to our purpose which Hebrew scholars translate *vernaculos*, according well with the *vernae* discussed above." (557)

LS: [29]Here it means again, I think, a prepolitical state. Now this . . . about the term, and it was necessary to make this remark because of the great historical importance of that term.

Now we return now to paragraph 514, which—we don't have to read that. These paragraphs I think make quite clear how Vico means his interpretation of myths—namely, his point which he makes there that[30] the early myths were austere, and the less serious interpretation of the myth was given by interpreters or poets belonging to a time of disintegration or decay. Yes, but this austerity must be properly understood because . . . for example, that there are myths of incest, because incest was not in this early stage due to lust but to sheer necessity. You know there were not—there's so few human beings around . . . . Good.

Now we come I think to a paragraph which was very important to Mr. Gray, in 516.

Mr. Reinken: "In this way, piety and religion made the first men naturally (1) prudent, by taking counsel from the auspices of Jove—" (516)

LS: Now he shows that the early men had the cardinal virtues . . . prudence and so on, but he makes clear in what form. I mean the prudence consisted simply in their listening to auspices, yes . . . and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "(2) just both in that first justice toward Jove (who as we have seen gave his name to the just) and in that toward men, by not meddling in one another's affairs, as Polyphemus tells Ulysses of the giants scattered among the caves of Sicily (which, though it appears to be justice, was in fact savagery);"

LS: In other words, they had no incentives to meddle with other people. You know, [31]the idea of taking away something from the others had not yet occurred to them, so they were in a way too stupid to be unjust. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and moreover (3) temperate, content with one woman for their lifetime."

LS: Yes, which also had to do with a mixture of scarcity and fear of being struck by lightning. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> And, as we shall see later, piety and religion likewise made them strong, industrious, and magnanimous. Such were the virtues of the golden age, which was not, as effeminate poets later pictured it, an age in which pleasure was law. For in the golden age of the theological poets men insensible to every refinement of wearisome reflection took pleasure only in what was lawful, and regarded as lawful only what was useful, as is still the case, we observe, with peasants. (The heroic origin of the Latin verb *iuvare* is preserved in the expression *iuvat*, ["it

> helps"] for "it is pleasant.") Nor were the philosophers right in imagining it as an age in which men read the eternal laws of justice in the bosom of Jove, for at first they read in the aspect of the sky the laws dictated to them by the thunderbolts.

LS: [32]In other words, these were the divine laws which they knew. Namely, first of all (and I think that's the crucial point), not universal laws, you remember that, but specific command[s] for this situation—say, Move this way on your march, and not that way. These were the first laws. And [they are] not laws like the laws of which the philosophers speak. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "In conclusion, the virtues of that first time were such as we found admired by the Scythians, who would fix a knife in the ground and adore it as a god, and thus justify their killings; that is, they were virtues of the senses, with an admixture of religion and savage cruelty, whose affinity may still be observed among witches, which we know from the Axioms." (516)

LS: Yes. So in other words the law . . . . Good. Now what do—I remember you made some use of this paragraph, Mr. Gray, different from what we said now?

Mr. Gray: No . . . .

LS: Good. Then we move on. Now, let us also read the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From this early morality of the superstitious and cruel gentile world came the custom of sacrificing human victims to the gods. This we have from the most ancient Phoenicians, among whom, when some great calamity was imminent, such as war, famine, or pestilence, the kings sacrificed their own children to placate the wrath of heaven, as Philo of Bylbus narrates." (517)

LS: Philo? How does it . . . . Philo—

Mr. Reinken: Philo of Byblus.

LS: [33]. . . . Yes. Now in other words human sacrifices, just as incest, were part of this early world. Yes, and let us read also[34] the last sentence of this long paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Such a mild, benign, sober, decent, and well-behaved time it was!" (517)

LS: The golden age; yes. And an explanation now. So the opposite of the golden age, and of course one would also have to do—there is some reference in Nicolini's commentary on this paragraph to the story of the daughter of Jephthah, in the book of Judges—you know, the human sacrifice, which Vico has I think discussed elsewhere, not [in] the final version of the *New Science*. But of course one would have to consider also the story [of] the sacrifice of Abraham, how he would have interpreted it. He doesn't mention it. Good. 518.

Mr. Reinken: "We may conclude from all this how empty has been the conceit of the learned concerning the innocence of the golden age observed in the first gentile nations."

LS: Yes, of course in one sense it was absolutely innocent. I mean, they couldn't know better. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> In fact, it was a fanaticism of superstition which kept the first men of the gentiles, savage, proud, and most cruel as they were, in some sort of restraint by main terror of a divinity they had imagined. Reflecting on this superstition, Plutarch poses the problem whether it was a lesser evil thus impiously to venerate the gods than not to believe in them at all. But he is not just in weighing this cruel superstition against atheism, for from the former arose the most enlightened nations, while no nation in the world was ever founded on atheism. (518)

LS: Yes, well this has to do with Vico's . . . that he tried—he proves not only divine providence but also the fundamental nature of religion for all civilization. But this is of course an ambiguous argument, because if this bestial thing, superstitious fanaticism, was necessary for founding the nations, this doesn't answer the question whether it is still necessary for them[35] [at] their peak. This ambiguity[36] we have observed before. And then finally the last paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "So much may be said of the divine morality of the first peoples of the lost human race." (519)

LS: Lost. Yes, in what sense?

Student: Forgotten.

LS: Forgotten, but of course also in the religious sense, ya? I mean, they were after the Fall. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "The heroic morality we shall discuss in its place." (519)

LS: Yes. You see what happens then to the divine in contradistinction to the heroic, and above all—and the heroic is not the last—to the human? And you know the term divine is applied to the lowest here, and—from here we should remember, perhaps, the distinction between the highest and the best. We found [this] in paragraph 364. And I have here also a reference[37] to paragraph 45 end; I do not remember now what it is. Oh yes, when he uses the Roman term, or the Latin term, of Jupiter: *Optimus Maximus*, the best and the greatest—and which[38] of course underlines the biblical notion, and he divorces the two things. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: In support of Mr. Gray's paper, the fact that there is not a thematic place for the discussion of the true human morality, but he will not—he discusses the heroic morality in its place. If he discusses human morality, what is best for the third age—men at their peak—he does not do it, he does not here say at least that he will do it in its place. It may be discussed outside of its place, and by inferences—

LS: Yes, in the first place, was this part of the argument of Mr. Gray? Because I missed it.

Mr. Gray: . . . .

Reader: No, I was merely offering it, using it as a proof.

LS: You read Mr. Gray . . . .

Mr. Reinken: In support of his argument, that this would contribute to the thesis. As I understood Mr. Gray's paper, it was showing Vico to be something of a democratic thinker, at least expounding a good deal of—slipping a lot of democracy in under the table.

LS: Ya.[39] So in other words, if this is correct—I mean, I do not now go into this other question of whether this is a good interpretation of Mr. Gray [laughter]. But it is surely[40] a possibility regarding Vico. So the remarks about democracy would give a hint regarding the true morality, yes, but that is the question. That is the question. I mean, it would not be irrelevant, but whether it is so important as is here implied is another matter. I remember one passage here—well, let us turn to paragraph 565 right away. If I remember well, this was one of your favorite paragraphs.[41] I begin to see now what Mr. Gray meant with that part of his paper which I couldn't follow. Paragraph 565.

Mr. Reinken:

> The other divinity born among these most ancient human things was Venus, a character of civil beauty, whence *honestas* had the meanings of nobility, beauty, and virtue. For this is the order in which these three ideas must have been born. The first to be understood was the civil beauty which appertained to the heroes. Then the natural beauty which is apprehended by the human senses, but only by those men of perception and comprehension who know how to discern the parts and grasp their harmony in the body as a whole.

LS: In other words, early men had the same[42] subtlety regarding physical beauty which dogs have. As you surely know[43] dogs are extremely non-discriminating in the choice of their mates. I mean, it is one of the greatest nightmares of their owners, of [owners of] beautiful female dogs. So maybe early men were that way, so maybe—good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "in which beauty essential consists. This is why peasants and men of the squalid plebs understand little or nothing of beauty (which shows the error of the philologians who say that in these simple and stupid times of which we are speaking kings were chosen for their handsome and well-proportioned bodies—"

LS: Yes, this is an old story going back to classical antiquity. The first kings were chosen for their beautiful appearance. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "for this tradition is to be understood as referring to civil beauty, which was the nobility of the heroes)." (565)

LS: I.e. the mere descent, the mere descent or status, not how they look. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And lastly the beauty of virtue, which is called *honestas* and is understood only by philosophers." (565)

LS: Ya. Only by philosophers.[44] Where do we have to look for the true human morality? Philosophers. [45]Yes, and he had spoken here of course as we know in the chapter on morality of vulgar virtues, as distinguished from . . . . But we should also consider paragraphs 130 to 133, which we have discussed before. Perhaps we re-read this paragraph . . . .

Mr. Reinken: "This axiom dismisses from the school of our Science the Stoics, who seek to mortify the senses, and the Epicureans, who make them the criterion. For both deny providence, the former chaining themselves to fate, the latter abandoning themselves to chance." (130)

LS: . . . 430.

Mr. Reinken: 430?

LS: 130. Oh yes, I'm sorry, yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> The latter, moreover, affirm that the human soul dies with the body. Both should be called monastic, or solitary, philosophers. On the other hand, this axiom admits to our school the political philosophers, and first of all the Platonists, who agree with all the lawgivers on these three main points: that there is divine providence, that human passions should be moderated and made into human virtues, and that the human soul is immortal. Thus from this axiom are derived the three principles of this Science. (130)

LS: Yes, but now we come to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Philosophy considers man as he should be and so can be of service to but very few, those who wish to live in the Republic of Plato and not to fall back into the dregs of Romulus." (131)

LS: So in other words, the political philosophy taught by the very same Plato[46] has the same morality which all legislators have in principle for the general run of men. But philosophy proper, not philosophy qualified by being political, considers man as he ought to be. And such men of course, who wish to live in the republic of Plato, i.e. not in . . . . [47] [We now see], I think, if we do not hear anything to the contrary, [that][48] human morality on the highest level would be philosophic morality as taught by philosophers. [49] This of course will not be sufficient for political purposes, and therefore the question of democracy will come. Yes. I mean, if this would be true, which we are already far from knowing now, then his position would be similar to that of Spinoza, who has a kind of morality modeled on Stoic and Epicurean . . . more Stoic than Epicurean; and at the same time he has a political teaching, regarding democracy in particular, which discusses also the moral basis of democracy—which of course is not identical with the morality of the *Ethics*, because only a few men would be in fact philosophers . . . . But we have not sufficient basis for deciding that. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: One question. At the end of the chapter we just read, when he says the four cardinal virtues—the third one, temperance, man being temperate, rests on the fact that they only take one wife. That . . . 507, where he says the reason they only take one wife is because they brought this wife into their family. Now that isn't sufficient or necessary.

LS: In the family—

Mr. Butterworth: Yes.

LS: I mean—but the key point, I believe, is[50] the fright which they got; I mean, they were surprised in their dealing with a woman, any woman, by lightning. And then they run away into the cave and had the feeling that they were somehow threatened because they needed that act in the open.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, except that even when going into the cave, they could have gotten more than one woman.

LS: Yes, in that state of fright [laughter], I believe this would . . . . Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Miller: Piety and religion did not affect Abraham in the same [way] that [it] affected these—

LS: According to his official teaching, surely not. Pagan religion was entirely different. And one would have to figure out how he would recover traces of this primitive barbarism in the Old Testament, as well; I mean, he doesn't do us that favor. We have to . . . for ourselves. Now in 522 we get a piece of political philosophy.

Mr. Reinken:

> This vulgar tradition together with the false belief in the matchless wisdom of the ancients tempted Plato to a vain longing for those times in which philosophers reigned or kings were philosophers. And certainly the fathers as noted in the axioms must have been monarchic family kings, superior to all other members of their families and subject only to God. Their authority was fortified by frightful religions and sanctioned by dreadful punishments, as must have been that of the Cyclopes, in whom Plato recognizes the first family-fathers of the world. This tradition, misunderstood, gave rise to that common error of all political theorists, that the first form of civil government in the world was monarchic. They are thus given over to those false principles of evil politics: that civil governments were born either of open violence or of fraud which later broke out into violence. But [the truth is that] in those times, full of arrogance and savagery because of the fresh emergence from bestial liberty (on which we have set forth an axiom

> above), in the extreme simplicity and crudeness of a life content with the spontaneous fruits of nature, satisfied to drink the water of the springs and to sleep in the caves, in the natural equality of a state in which each of the fathers was sovereign in his own family, one cannot conceive of either fraud or violence by which one man could subject all the others to a civil monarchy. Further proof of this will be set forth later on. (552)

LS: Yes. Now[51] what is the common error of all political thinkers? Let us, well, let us look at the practical conclusion. That common error leads to the justification of force and fraud, whereas Vico's view does not. But this must not obscure the fact that within the first stage of which Vico speaks, force and not indeed fraud, but [rather] self-deception, prevailed absolutely. But you see this is one of these paragraphs which, if one reads it without considering other things, is a kind of vindication of the golden age, which it cannot be in the context of Vico's teaching. In the first state there is not yet any labor, you see this point . . . of nature, nothing else reminding of its description of the golden age. Yes. What he says about Plato either appears to be a self-contradiction in Plato or regarding Plato. That Plato said on the one hand, the[52] [time] in which the philosophers ruled or the kings philosophized[53] [was] in the past, and on the other hand he says the first rulers were Cyclopes, like Polyphemus. Is there any basis for Vico's assertion that Plato placed the rule of philosophers at the beginning?

Mr. Reinken: In the *Statesman* when you have the world going on these vast alternations —

LS: But was their ruler a philosopher?

Mr. Reinken: In that first realm, I thought you had said that men philosophized.

LS: Ya, did men philosophize? Plato leaves it open. We don't know. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . in the *Republic* where . . . philosophers are ruling . . . .

LS: Ya, but this . . . . Mr. . . .

Student: Yes . . . . I don't think it would be possible . . . .

LS: Yes, but at least . . . . No, the only passage in the *Republic*—Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . the myth of Atlantis, the reference to . . . .

LS: Yes, there is something to that, that is not too bad. But it is not equally true, because rule of philosophers is not mentioned there. No, but it's very simple . . . . when he describes the decay, you know the descent. Aristotle's timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny, and . . . . That is, I think—and it is not, this is of course not a mere accident, although[54] it doesn't prove that Plato . . . . This is the only basis for that. Good. Now 523, however—it's the second sentence we need only.

Mr. Reinken: "Hence there remained the eternal property that happier than the commonwealth conceived by Plato are those where the fathers teach only religion and where they are admired by their sons as their sages, revered as their priests, and feared as their kings." (523)

LS: Yes. So, and this is of course on the face of it directly opposed to what Plato says. Not rule of philosophers, but rule of this savage religion is the pre-condition of political happiness—and which I think means that Vico regards the rule of philosophers as absolutely impossible. And therefore what is [the] alternative? The alternative is a society not ruled by philosophers, in which religion is at least the basic stratum. And how far this would extend to the peak of that society we do not yet know. Let us now turn to paragraph 525.

Mr. Reinken: "In the very birth of economy, they fulfilled it in its best idea, which is that the fathers by labor and industry should leave a patrimony to their sons, so that they may have an easy and comfortable and secure subsistence—"

LS: This could be read as the recommendation of democracy. A condition where everyone works for his living; an abolition of all privileges. We don't know. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> even if foreign commerce should fail, or even all the fruits of civil life, or even the cities themselves, so that in such last emergencies the families at least may be preserved, from which there is hope that the nations may rise again. And the patrimony they leave should include places with good air, with their own perennial water supply, in situations of natural strength whither withdrawal is possible in case the cities have to be abandoned, and in fields with wide bottom lands on which to maintain the poor peasants taking refuge with them on the downfall of the cities, by whose labor they can maintain themselves as lords maintain themselves as lords. (525)

LS: You see, that's a new situation; the second stage is where some work, do the hard and dirty work, and others lorded over them. In the first stage everyone worked for himself. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Such were the orders that providence—"

LS: [55]There's another statement about providence at the end of this paragraph, when he refers to Plato.

Mr. Reinken: "All this, ordained by providence to give a beginning to gentile humanity, was regarded by Plato as the result of wise human measures on the part of the first founders of the cities." (525)

LS: Ya. Now in other words, this [is his] critique of Plato: no *human* providence, as Plato claimed, but divine providence, i.e. [at] the foundation,[56] no human providence because men lacked reason and were controlled only by imagination and passion. And therefore if something reasonable came out of it, it can only be due to divine providence. We remember that. This is one point. Yes, and this distinction of course which we mentioned before: first labor of the fathers

themselves, and only later on labor done by the peasants, the subjugated peasants. Let us also look at the end of paragraph 532. "Among the first founders of cities."

Mr. Reinken: "[Of a piece] with the aforesaid error of Livy is the definition he gives of the asylum, that it was *vetus urbes condentium consilium*, 'an old counsel of founders of cities'; for in the first founders of cities, who were simple men, it was not counsel but nature that was employed by providence." (532)

LS: Ya. No reason of any kind, but natural . . . sorts. Yes. Let us read[57] [paragraph 526] from the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "However, above all else, it was with reference to these perennial springs that political theorists asserted that the sharing of water was the occasion for families being brought together—"

LS: By the way, he never states political theorists—*politici*, the Latin *politici* means, at the most, political writers. That one should not—political writers. Political theorists especially today would mean theorists in contradistinction to people who observe political society, which is a very wrong meaning. Machiavelli would be a simple example of a *politico*, or—. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> that the sharing of water was the occasion for families being brought together in their vicinity. Hence the first communities were called *phratriai* by the Greeks, and the first lands were called *pagi* by the Latins, like the Dorian Greek for spring, *paga*; that is, water, the first of the two principal solemnities of marriage. For the Romans celebrated marriage *aqua et igni* because the first marriages were naturally contracted between men and women sharing the same water and fire, that is, of the same family; whence as we have said above marriage must have begun between brothers and sisters. And the lar of each house was the god of the fire aforesaid; hence *focus laris* for the hearth where the family father sacrificed to the household gods. In the Laws of the Twelve Tables, in the article on parricide, according to the reading of Jacobus Raevardus, these gods are called *deivei parentum*. A similar expression is frequently found in Holy Scripture: God of our fathers, or more explicitly, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (526)

LS: Ya. We see here the easy transition from pagan to biblical examples, which always erases this question: Was there also a familial origin of traditional society in biblical times? Beginning of 529.

Mr. Reinken: "Afterward, the god-fearing giants, those settled in the mountains, must have become sensible of the stench from the corpses of their dead rotting on the ground near by—"

LS: So the origin of burial, in other words, the third basic institution. Yes, you see he keeps a very practical explanation of it. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> and must have begun to bury them; for enormous skulls and bones have been found and are still found, generally on mountaintops, which is a strong indication that the bodies of the impious giants who were scattered everywhere through the valleys and the plains must have rotted unburied and their skulls and bones must have been swept into the sea by the rivers or completely worn away by the rains. And they surrounded these sepulchers with so much religion, or divine terror, that burial grounds were called by the Latins religious places par excellence. Hence emerged the universal belief in the immortality of human souls, which we established as the third of the principles on which our Science is based. The souls of the departed were called *dii manes*, and in the Law of the Twelve Tables in the article on patricide they are spoken of as *deivei parentum*. (529)

LS: Ya, we have seen that this very phrase was discussed in paragraph 526, where it was followed by a Latin reference to holy, sacred history, where God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob. Now there's a necessity to bury the dead because of the stench. Now who are these dead? Ordinarily the parents; they are likely to die before the children, you know,[58] [who] still think[59] [their parents are] alive, but no longer visible men. This is the primitive origin[60] of the belief in the immortality of the souls. Worship of the dead—and this can easy become the worship of the dead parents as gods. In other words, you have one kind of these gods . . . the dead. In brief, an allusion to the view that the origin of religion is ancestor worship, the view which was then stated with great power, as far as the Indo-Germanic nations at least were concerned, by . . . . Yes, but the question of course is always how far does this apply to the Hebrews. In paragraph 530 we find another parallel between Hebrews and gentiles. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> From the same origin must have come the word *filius*, which, qualified by the name or house of the father, signified noble, precisely as we saw above as the Roman patrician was defined as one "who can name his father." And we saw above that the names of the Romans were really patronymics, which were so often used by the first Greeks; Homer, for example, calling the heroes "sons of the Achaeans"; and in like fashion in Holy Scripture sons of Israel is used of the nobles of the Hebrew people. (530)

LS: Ya, which has of course not the slightest basis there, that they are the nobles of the Hebrew people.[61] Again, no difference between Hebrews and gentiles on this particular point. And yes, but what does it also imply, since they are used as strictly parallel? That Israel, corresponding to the . . . as it were, Achaeans, is as little as an individual as a . . . i.e. a poetic character, a poetic character like . . . and Solon, as we have seen. What then was stated explicitly in [the] nineteenth century . . . the tribe—you know the twelve sons of Jacob, the fathers of these tribes, are not individuals, but on the contrary: the tribal identity is project[ed] into twelve individuals who are then given a mythical father. These kinds of things, whether [or not] Vico thought of that, are surely implied, and the consequences were drawn in the[62] nineteenth century.

531, at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus by the graves of their buried dead the giants showed their dominion over their lands, and Roman law called for burial of the dead in a proper place to make it religious.

With truth they could pronounce those heroic phrases: we are sons of this earth, we are born from these oaks. Indeed, the heads of families among the Latins called themselves *stirpes* and *stipites*, stems and stocks—" (531)

LS: I meant 532. I'm sorry, 532.

Mr. Reinken: "These matters have all been set forth above, but in their proper place we have repeated them to show that Livy misattributed the heroic phrase of Romulus and the fathers—" (532)

LS: Let us stop here. "In their proper place." So this is a phrase which might be of some importance. Everyone should discuss the rise of folk or, for that matter, masterpieces should discuss things in their proper place . . . origin. But the phrase is so strange. I happen to know in the case of Machiavelli, who uses this expression once with particular—. He says: I have discussed the same thing at another place and for another purpose, and this led to quite interesting further observations, you know, that he discusses the same object—subject—for different purposes, and in this case they proved to be opposite purposes.[63] Now there is something parallel in paragraph 566, end. Yes. "And this has been observed."

Mr. Reinken: I don't—566.

LS: Ya, 566 end. "And this has been observed . . . at another time and for another purpose."[vi] This is almost exactly the Machiavellian phrase. I mention this only as one of the few examples we have of this nature. We turn now to paragraph—

Mr. Reinken: Weren't you just saying that 526 and 527 were such an example? The same Latin phrase is repeated, *deivei parentum*. And in one case, I was struck by the oddness or the grandeur of the Latin. In one place[64] the phrase refers to the ancient dead as the gods themselves; he tells you that in 527. In 526[65] he seems to be speaking of the gods of the fathers, not the gods which are the fathers. And he follows this up with this *Deus Abraham*, which is no genitive—

LS: Ya, this is—it hasn't occurred to me. But it is very simple because there is no genitive in this way in Hebrew. The construction is different. And you don't have a genitive in the Indo-Germanic sense. But when you look—[66] I don't have the vulgate at home but[67] I looked at the New Testament, where you have it in Greek; and in Matthew 12:32, for example, it is of course exactly the same[vii]: . . . which could be, on the basis of Greek, the god Abraham. But it has of course in the context a very clear meaning; there can be no doubt about that. Whether anything . . . Vico's mind I have not the slightest idea. Good. Now paragraph 533. Here we come across another example of this kind. A short one.

[vi] Strauss's translation. The Bergin and Fisch translation reads: "And so they continued to be called in the Roman laws, which must have spoken with all propriety, as Anatoine Favre observes in his *Iurisprudentiae papinianeae scientia*, and as we have already remarked above in another connection." 566, p. 204.

[vii] The Greek in Mt. 12:32 has a phrase that is generally translated "the son of man." It could also be translated "the son, the man." This helps consider the question of whether Vico meant the god of Abraham or Abraham the god.

Mr. Reinken: "Imagination here created the fourth divinity of the so-called *gentes maiores*; namely Apollo, apprehended as god of civil light. Thus the heroes were called *kleitoi*, 'resplendent,' by the Greeks, from *kleos*, 'glory,' and they were called *inclyti* by the Latins, from *cluer*, 'the splendor of arms,' and consequently from that light into which Juno Lucina brought noble offspring. So here, after Urania—the muse defined by Homer as the science of good and evil—"

LS: By the way, there is nothing of this kind in Homer about Urania. And Nicolini reminded of the biblical phrase occurring at the beginning, you know? Knowledge of good and evil, ya? Good. So of course from Vico's point of view that would naturally be the knowledge of good and evil in [its] early form:[68] the knowledge of auspices, i.e. of particular cases, of what to do now, what to do now given divinity in the original sense through auspices. And he's . . . here, which Homer defines [as the] science of good and evil, or of divination.

Mr. Reinken: "in virtue of which Apollo is the god of poetic wisdom or divination—they must have conceived the second of the Muses, Clio, the narrator of the heroic history. The first history of this sort must have begun with the genealogies of the heroes, just as the sacred history begins with the descendants of the patriarchs." (533)

LS: You see again one of these parallels, which are not explicable if there is such an absolute difference, and there was never such a decay into primitive forms in the Hebrew history.[69] And Vico's assertion, as I mentioned on a former occasion, is not even compatible with the biblical account itself. In other words, it is . . . more pious, if one may say so, than the Bible itself because there was, after all—I mean . . . was a kind of island. And then until the time of Abraham there is not [an] island to speak of, and then between Abraham—well, there is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then there comes the Egyptian period, which is also a form of or kind of decay. [70]What I'm suggesting is this: Do the generalities of the Bible have the same status as the generalities of the pagan heroes? That would be the question. Paragraph 537, toward the end.

Mr. Reinken: "This humanity had its origin in *humare*, 'to bury' (which is the reason we took the practice of burial as the third principle of our Science), and the Athenians, who were the most human of all the nations, were, according to Cicero, the first to bury their dead." (537)

LS: And you see the Athenians were the most human of all nations, not only of the gentiles. Good. Well, I thought of that last time, but I forgot in which connection, when he spoke of—oh yes, when he had these seven nations, you remember? Seven nations and the Greeks, remember that? Good. 547. If I omit anything which you regard as important, Mr. Gray, you must stop me, as I said before. By the way, in paragraph [5]42 there is a quote, a half-quote from the Bible, from . . . I mention this in passing. Good. Now 544 there is also—let us read 544 which contains also a biblical passage.

Mr. Reinken: 544. "Further, when they called the ears of grain golden apples, these must have been the only gold in the world. For at that time metallic gold was still unmined—"

LS: The assertion is that the original meaning of gold is not the metal but the color and the value, i.e. it [71][refers] much more [to] grain, and the application to the metal is derivative from the original meaning. Because how could gold, which is an original word in every language . . . how could this have come into being in a society which had no inkling of gold? That's the point, that's the general context. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> For at that time metallic gold was still unmined, and they did not know how to extract it in crude masses, to say nothing of shining and burnishing it; nor indeed, when men still drank the water of springs, could the use of gold have been at all prized. It was only later, from the metal's resemblance in color to the most highly prized food of those times, that it was metaphorically called gold. Hence Plautus was obliged to say *thesaurum auri* to distinguish a hoard of gold from a granary. Certainly Job, among the great things from which he had fallen, mentions that he had been wont to eat bread made of grain. And in the— (544)

LS: And so then you see again the application to a biblical passage; and Job is according to Vico the oldest Hebrew writer, older than Moses, in paragraph 465. So the early history of the Hebrews, their early language, literature, and so on, corresponds in this respect also to the pagan literature. And we turn now to paragraph 547.

Mr. Reinken:

> From all of which we derive this great corollary: that the division of the four ages of the world—that is, the ages of gold, silver, copper, and iron—was invented by the poets of degenerate times. For it was this poetic gold, namely grain, that among the Greeks lent its name to the golden age, whose innocence was but the extreme savagery of the Cyclopes (in whom as we have said several times above, Plato recognizes the first fathers of families), who lived separately and alone in their caves with their wives and children, never concerning themselves with one another's affairs, as Polyphemus tells Ulysses in Homer. (547)

LS: Ya. So Vico agrees here with Plato against the poets proper, but also against the Bible, insofar as the Bible begins the story of mankind with the story of the paradise. In 548, towards the end we find one of the longer biblical quotations, from[72] Psalm 122. Now 550 gives a further description, a characterization of the natural right of the gentiles. Let us read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

> In this way the boundaries of the fields were fixed and maintained. This division, too generally set forth by Hermogenianus the jurisconsult, has been imagined as taking place by deliberate agreement of men, and carried out with justice and respected in good faith, at a time when there was as yet no armed public force and consequently no civil authority of law. But it cannot be understood save as taking place among men of extreme wildness, observing a frightful religion which had fixed and circumscribed them within certain lands, and whose bloody ceremonies had consecrated their first walls. (550)

LS: Let us stop there. And the last sentence from the end, the second—"And here."

Mr. Reinken:

> And here begins what we are demonstrating in this work: that the natural right of the nations was by divine providence ordained separately for each people, and only when they became acquainted did they recognize it as common to all. For if the Roman heralds consecrated with these herbs were inviolate among the other peoples of Latium, it could only have been because the latter, without knowing anything of Roman usage, observed the same custom. (550)

LS: Here is the passage to which Mr. Gray referred, and which I had overlooked, namely, that the private/common distinction is applied here in a more subtle way. We had first the private passions/common good, but now we have private origin, i.e. an origin of this or that nation and yet the common good of mankind, without anyone being aware [73] that this was common. This is quite correct. In 551.

Mr. Reinken: "So the family fathers provided for their heroic families through religion, and through religion it had to be maintained. Hence it was the perpetual custom of the nobles to be religious, as Julius Scaliger observes in his *Poetica*. It must then be a strong indication of the decline of a nation when the nobles scorn their native religion." (551)

LS: Hmm.[74] The passage cannot be found, it seems, in Scaliger's *Poetics*[viii]; at least Nicolini has said that. But again, what would be the proof of this? Strictly speaking, only that the pre-democratic republic, i.e. the old patrician commonwealths, go to pieces when the nobles cease to respect their native religion. Now yes, you wanted—

Student: What did you understand to be the connection between Vico's natural right of nations and the Roman *ius gentes*?

LS: *Ius gentium*—there is a reference to that later in today's assignment.

Student: Even at the end of 550, that section you read, there seems to be a merging of the descriptive and normative, i.e.—

LS: Ya. We [will] come across a passage; if you will have a bit patience, you will. Paragraph 545, at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "And here it is worth reflecting how men in the feral state, fierce and untamed as they were, came to pass from their bestial liberty into human society."

LS: You see the clear distinction: bestial liberty, human society.

[viii] Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558), classical scholar whose *Poetice*, or *Poetics*, was published in 1561.

Mr. Reinken: "For in order that the first of them should reach that first kind of society which is matrimony, they had need of the sharp stimulus of bestial lust, and to keep them in it the stern restraints of frightful religions were necessary." (545)

LS: Yes, you see again a correspondence: bestial lust, frightful religion. The transition from the bestial state to human society is of course not bestial lust, because bestial lust is . . . the specifically human thing is religion, time and again. Now in paragraph 555 we find[75] this: the first society, [that of] the patricians, is noble because its basis is religion, i.e. it has—the fathers . . . claims because of their knowledge of divinity; they have the auspices. The second society,[76] [that] of the serfs, originates in utility only . . . in self-preservation, and therefore it is base. This in paragraph 555. And he quotes very interestingly the latter, and that is about the second sentence from the beginning. You can read that.

Mr. Reinken: "The second comers, since they came out of a necessity of saving their lives, gave a beginning to society in the proper sense—"

LS: You see, this is . . . society properly understood. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "With a view principally to utility, and consequently base and servile." (555)

LS: Ya, you remember the reference to Spinoza before, that his notion was a huckster's notion of society? That meant that it was based on a notion of calculation as the ground of civil society. For Vico the point is religion, i.e. [what is] noble. But what kind of religion, we have gradually come to see. This reference to Spinoza occurs in paragraph 335, incidentally. Now [later] in the same paragraph[77] he says "the sacred history . . . uniting of the giants who were prior to the deluge."[ix] You know, the giants are after the deluge, as a consequence of the deluge, remember, because of the enormous humidity. They became eight feet tall, or whatever it is. Paragraphs 556 to -7 are the central paragraphs of the whole work,[78] but the counting has not been done by Vico; that is due to Nicolini, but it is possible that Vico did count them without putting down the numbers. That I do not know. I've never seen a manuscript. Yes?[79]

Student: Did Nicolini change these paragraphs?

LS: No, I don't think so.

Student: In the beginning of the . . . .

LS: . . . .

Student: Yes . . . .

LS: Yes. Now here there is (in paragraph 556) no natural difference between the sons and the slaves—I mean, the sons of these patricians and the slaves, of course not. They're all human beings, as we know[80]. This distinction was made by that natural right of the gentiles, which is not simply natural, as we have seen before. At the end of paragraph 557 he seems to indicate[81] [that]

[ix] Strauss's translation. Paragraph 555.

Ephraim's family was of the same kind as the family of the early gentile nations. In 556 he had spoken about the *patria potestas*, the power of the father;[82] in the light of this one must of course think [about] how the sacrifice of Isaac appeared to Vico. [83]Only at the end of paragraph 557, there is a little amusing thing which I learned from Nicolini. Yes? "And with one of these."

Mr. Reinken: "It must have been with a family such as these that Abraham made war against the gentile kings; and his servants who aided him, are called by a name much to our purpose which Hebrew scholars translate *vernaculos*, according—" (557)

LS: Ya, and so on. Who would you think are these Hebrew scholars? You would think some writers of the seventeen[th] or sixteenth century. No. The vulgate.[84] That I learned from [Nicolini]. In other words, he quotes Jerome, that's the Hebrew scholar, and this is quite surprising. In paragraph 558, there are also some—here, the second half of that paragraph we might read, when he comes to Antinous.

Mr. Reinken:

> This explains how Ulysses is on the point of cutting off the head of Antinous, [that is, Eurylochus], the chief of his *socii*, just for a word which, though well meant, does not please him; and the pious Aeneas kills his *socius* Misenus when it is needful for a sacrifice. This episode was preserved in a vulgar tradition, but Vergil, since in the mild days of the Roman people it was too harsh a thing to tell of Aeneas, whom the poet himself celebrates for his piety, discreetly pretends that Misenus was killed by Triton for presuming to rival him on the trumpet. At the same time he gives clear hints for the right understanding of the story by placing the death of Misenus among the solemnities prescribed to Aeneas by the Sybil. (558)

LS: So[85] what did Vergil do? He improved the tradition in accordance with his higher notions of morality, but let them still see the original form of the myth, yes? He alludes to it, so the reader can see that this is Vergil's change. Whether . . . of Vergil, I do not know. [86]Two more passages, and then we are through. 562.

Mr. Reinken: "In this connection gentile poetic imagination created two other major divinities, Mars and Venus. The former was a character of the heroes as first and properly fighting for their altars and hearths, *pro aris et focis*. This sort of fighting was always heroic, for it was fighting for their own religion, upon which mankind falls back when all natural help is despaired of. Whence the wars of religion are most sanguinary." (562)

LS: Let us stop here. And the other . . . . So you see, here he refers obviously not to the gentiles in particular but to something which also is true of mankind in general. And the wars of religion—Vico lived practically in the age or shortly after it when they were particularly savage.[87] To all men it is heroic to fight for their own religion, and this of course would cut the other way around. For example, the Muslims against the Christian religion, the pagan Saxons against Charlemagne, and so on. And[88] as for the question of Mr. Nicgorski, that I think[89] probably comes out at the end of this section, at the end of paragraph 569. Read only the last seven lines, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

> For the reasons set forth, therefore, *gratia* and *caussa* were understood by the poetic Latins as having the same meaning with respect to the contracts observed by the plebeians of the heroic cities. Similarly, with the later introduction of contracts *de iure naturali gentium*, "by the natural law of nations" (to which Ulpian adds *humanarum*, "human" [nations]), *caussa* and *negocium* signified the same thing, for in such kinds of contracts— (569)

LS: This we do not need. This, the *ius naturale gentium humanarum*, the natural right of the humane nations, is of course not the natural right with which Vico is here concerned, which is the natural right of the most barbaric nations. In other words, the Roman law as it was developed by the jurisconsults is a very late law, civilized, and no inference from that is possible to the . . . and therefore the question of the Twelve Tables is so important for him. This would be the real old stuff, and unfortunately only fragments exist. There is another . . . in mind, which I—

Student: There seems to be a place in paragraph 9, and the other at the end of 550, where there seems to be some ambiguity in Vico's discussion of this one law, this historical law, and this law of Roman jurisprudence. In paragraph 9, when he's talking about divination—

LS: Let me see, paragraph 9.

Mr. Reinken: . . . "derive all the other essential differences shown by our Science between the natural right of the Hebrews and the natural right of the nations. The Roman jurisconsults defined the latter as having been ordained by divine providence along with human customs themselves. Thus the aforesaid lituus represents also the beginning of gentile universal history— " (9)

LS: Ya, you mean here the essential difference between [the] natural right of the Hebrews and the natural right of the gentiles. This is of course very essential, because[90] if he wants to make a distinction,[91] he should speak of the divine right of the Hebrews and of the natural right. But how can we defend it, this somewhat strange usage? Very simply, because there is—admittedly, part of the Old Testament law is natural right. But this cannot be that natural right of the gentiles which he discusses; according to the traditional use that would be rather the natural right of the philosophers than the natural right of the gentiles. Do you see that? I think it is a very provisional distinction which becomes clear later on. And in 550 you said—

Student: Well, here in paragraph 9, after he mentions the natural right of the Hebrews, the natural right of the nations, then he says: "the Roman jurisconsults defined the latter as having been ordained by divine providence along with human customs themselves." Now there he seems to be speaking of this *ius gentes*—

LS: *Gentium*.

Student: Yes, a form of—

LS: Ya,[92] that's a very complicated thing because there are divergent things in the Roman law text, as you know. According to one very famous statement of Ulpian, it is this: natural right proper is called *natura omnia animalia docuit*, what nature taught all animals. And so that from this point of view the *ius gentium* is a specific . . . i.e. to generate and raise offspring. It is natural because all animals do so, including human[s]. But anything that is specifically human, which is not due to positive law in this or that city, that is *ius gentium*. But then there are other passages when the two things seem to be identical. It's very obscure. There is a long discussion of that, for example, in Henry Sumner Maine's *Ancient Law*, but[93] this is vitiated by Maine's positivistic prejudices, and therefore I think that it cannot be taken literally. I do not know what the most recent study is about the concept of *ius gentium* . . . in Roman law. But one could easily ask Mr. . . , I suppose. I don't know. No, there is of course no one in the Law School teaching Roman law, but you would find someone at Notre Dame, I suppose. Scholars of canon law would be familiar with that. I can't help you much on this point.

But at any rate,[94] of course when Vico speaks of natural right, he's always adding something, what he is concerned with: the natural right of the gentiles. And that means of the gentiles, of course after the fall,[95] and that of men who lived in a bestial state. And the natural right would be the one which emerged by the first step outside of it, i.e. when a distinction was made between pious giants and impious giants. The natural right of the nations is primarily the right of the pious giants; the impious giants of course had no rights, and they had no notion of authority. But these fathers have rights and . . . . They were the bearers and executioners of the natural right as Vico understands it. And the question is whether the later stages—for example, in the stage in which[96] the fathers assembled and formed a senate and an aristocratic republic—there was also something also natural there. Yes? And still, when you have later a democracy it is there; popular liberty has also something natural to[97] [it]. But[98] that hitherto hasn't been stated explicitly. The only thing which I have been able to find clearly is that in the third stage, in the stage[99] he calls human[100] as distinguished from divine and heroic, there is civil equity, and natural equity has no longer any place, and the principle of civil equity which goes beyond positive law, of course, is utility. So that there is a criterion for judging laws after all. If you start from this civil/practical criterion, that natural law is . . . principles which permit you to distinguish between good and bad laws, at minimum, but a very important minimum of natural—. Now Vico says that standard is utility. I'm sure I do not know if he meant this in the sense of Bentham later, because he calls it reason of state, which [LS laughs] doesn't look like Bentham. We have to see if there is in fact any further illumination of this.

Now Mr. Gray, did I do justice to you? I mean, you made a number of remarks which did not occur in our present discussion.[101] What do you think is the most important passage which you read differently? And you may be of course be perfectly right, but which was that?

Mr. Gray: You know, it was just when I was reading . . . that were obscure in my own presentation. So there's no essential difference.

LS: Did you not say that . . . speak of a kind of hedonism of Vico?

Mr. Gray: I suggested—yes.

LS: . . . But what was the basis for the assertion?

Mr. Gray: Several assertions . . . .

LS: Can you tell me the paragraph?

Mr. Gray: Yes. [Long pause] 554 . . . .

LS: This is in itself . . . back to First Book of Aristotle's *Ethics* . . . . The honorable, the useful, and the best. You see here, in this sentence, here *naturale* means something different: it has the traditional meaning. The true friendship is natural, and it is a true friendship because in matrimony[102] all the three ends of good things—the honorable, the useful, and the . . . [x]—are naturally communicated. But this is not the primary matter of which he speaks. Here he uses natural in the traditional sense—I mean the completed and perfect, yes, and here he refers to Roman law[103], which is . . . marriage is the consortium of the holy life. And[104] this is the end[105] of the . . . this is not the early stage. And here there is nothing peculiarly Vichian. Mr. Emmert?

Mr. Emmert: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Emmert: The ends of matrimony are higher than the ends of civil society . . . .

LS: Not necessarily, because after all, why could not[106] the ends also be achieved [in the polis], but not on the level of one man one woman? That's not necessary. If you read the context of the First Book of the *Ethics*, you will see that political society is also meant[107] to achieve these . . . only among the whole citizen body and not merely among one man and one woman.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but here he speaks of matrimony in the traditional meaning of the term. And rather if you please, the higher form of marriage which arrives . . . in the human stage, as distinct from the divine and heroic stage. But his primary subject throughout the book is of course the first state, the first state of marriage. But we have to raise the question, of course, [of] why it's so terribly important to know the first stage, unless it has some consequences for now. And in other words, must Vico's teaching regarding the true morality not be different from the traditional moral teaching and be an outgrowth of his notion of the origins? We have not yet a perfectly clear answer to that, of course. But this is simply a restatement of the traditional view. And this is a . . . thing that he goes over[108]—I do not think I have a complete list of the positions that he alternately takes, but one is simply the accepted use of the tradition, and then you have suddenly also some . . . statements which were not generally accepted about the golden age which we have seen, praising these early men as such, not on the biblical basis, and all kinds of other things. One[109] must make a distinction. This statement itself says nothing about Vico. So next time—yes, who is the speaker next time, after Mr. Gray?

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[x] I presume Strauss said "best," but the audiofile is even less clear than usual.

[end of session]

[1] Deleted “and—morals, economics, and politics—.”
[2] Moved “then.”
[3] Deleted “makes.”
[4] Deleted “and.”
[5] Deleted “Let us treat—.”
[6] Deleted “of moral poetics, poetics of—I’m sorry—.”
[7] Deleted “the vulgar virtue.”
[8] Deleted “or.”
[9] Deleted “what do the—.”
[10] Deleted “But the situation—.”
[11] Deleted: “**LS**: Pardon?**Student:** [inaudible words].”
[12] Deleted “What you have—.”
[13] Deleted “It’s very—.”
[14] Deleted “he.”
[15] Deleted “But the other—.”
[16] Deleted “which, you know—.”
[17] Deleted “lightnings.”
[18] Deleted “And we see that—.”
[19] Deleted “isn’t it.”
[20] Deleted “looking.”
[21] Deleted “occurs.”
[22] Deleted “which one—.”
[23] Deleted “you have the state of nature.”
[24] Deleted “it’s not what is true of that—.”
[25] Deleted “Now what does he—.”
[26] Deleted “here.”
[27] Deleted “Then of course there could also be—.”
[28] Deleted “that.”
[29] Deleted “In other words—.”
[30] Deleted “the myths.”
[31] Deleted “they were too.”
[32] Deleted “These were—.”
[33] Deleted “Yes, the Bib—Philo—Biblio.”
[34] Deleted “the end of—.”
[35] Deleted “at.”
[36] Deleted “which.”
[37] Deleted “to the end—.”
[38] Deleted “is.”
[39] Deleted “but still, where would we find— Nevertheless he would have to give us—.”
[40] Deleted “a possible.”
[41] Deleted “So we see no.”
[42] Deleted “the.”
[43] Deleted “that.”
[44] Deleted “there were—.”
[45] Deleted “there are, sure.”
[46] Deleted “is—gives.”
[47] Deleted “We’ve reached.”
[48] Deleted “the.”
[49] Deleted “And the question.”
[50] Deleted “that.”
[51] Deleted “what is.”
[52] Deleted “times.”
[53] Deleted “i.e. the past.”
[54] Deleted “it is—.”

[55] Deleted “No, we don’t—let us read.”
[56] Deleted “at that time.”
[57] Deleted [inaudible word]; while Strauss is inaudible here the passage is clearly from paragraph 526.
[58] Deleted “whom they.”
[59] Deleted “to be.”
[60] Deleted “of immortality—.”
[61] Deleted “But what he is asserting but what is—.”
[62] Deleted “twentieth—in the.”
[63] Deleted “And let—.”
[64] Deleted “he speaks of—.”
[65] Deleted “he speaks of—.”
[66] Deleted “I did not.”
[67] Deleted “therefore.”
[68] Deleted “is.”
[69] Deleted “—and then of course, this is not even—I mean.”
[70] Deleted “This is, yes.”
[71] Deleted “means.”
[72] Deleted “the 122nd.”
[73] Deleted “of it.”
[74] Deleted “Now is this—.”
[75] Deleted “here.”
[76] Deleted “those.”
[77] Deleted “which,” moved “later,” and deleted “when.”
[78] Deleted “but it is of course not—.”
[79] Deleted “**Student**: . . . change these paragraphs also? **LS**: Pardon?”
[80] Deleted “that.”
[81] Deleted “the.”
[82] Deleted “where one.”
[83] Deleted “five hundred—yes, let us.”
[84] Deleted “The vulgate.”
[85] Deleted “what did, so.”
[86] Deleted “five hundred and.”
[87] Deleted “All men—.”
[88] Deleted “the—what—and.”
[89] Deleted “is.”
[90] Deleted “he should—whether—.”
[91] Deleted “he shouldn’t call the natural right of the—.”
[92] Deleted “this is of course—.”
[93] Deleted “this is due—.”
[94] Deleted “Vico’s natural—.”
[95] Deleted “after the fall,.”
[96] Deleted “when.”
[97] Deleted “that.”
[98] Deleted “what—.”
[99] Deleted “of what.”
[100] Deleted “stage.”
[101] Deleted “Do you think of—.”
[102] Deleted “the three—.”
[103] Deleted “here.”
[104] Deleted “this is not.”
[105] Deleted “rather.”
[106] Moved “in the polis.”
[107] Deleted “to bring.”
[108] Deleted “what we have not— We have not.”
[109] Deleted “must distinguish, one.”

Session 11: November 4, 1963

Leo Strauss: That was a very good paper,[i] and I think that it is the best that you have given hitherto, but I mean relatively good and absolutely good. And[1] you are a very modest man, I believe. The consequence is that you deliver[ed] [your paper] so unsatisfactorily because, since you do not believe [that] you have done well enough, you read too fast. This is psychologically—

Student: Well, there may be something to that.

LS: Ya. Well, good . . . . What did you say about civil equity towards the end of the paper? Because it was very hard to follow you, I believe. There will be quite a few who would agree with that. Now what did you say about civil equity? I couldn't follow it.

Student: Well, I said that civil equity was used earlier as a means of distinguishing from one age to another. That is to say the time of civil equity was different from the time of natural equity.

LS: Ya, but where do you place the civil equity?

Student: Well, we would expect, I'd say, that this would be a time of civil equity. The time of heroic commonwealths.

LS: You think so. I mean, if I remember well, it means exactly the human age, not the heroic or divine age. And the civil age is the age of utility proper. There is to some extent utility earlier, [that] is true, but the undisguised orientation by utility is a characteristic of the human age. Mr. . . . , you seem to agree with me.

Student: The idea is that the heroic age is a natural age . . . .

LS: Ya, in the age when the civil laws take over, they are more rational. It doesn't have to be democracy, it can also be absolute monarchy of the enlightened type.

Student: The time of civil equity, though, is the time of the particular law as opposed to the universal laws. The laws are in particular, as you said, rather than a generality.

LS: No, that is the early age, where you have examples rather than laws.

Student: Well, I seem to recall that he used the example, the phrase: "The law is harsh, but so is rhetoric." And he says the law is difficult because it is in particulars.

LS: Ya, but even this ruthless, literal—[2] I don't believe [it] belongs to the stage of fully developed humanity. It's still a relic of the early savagery.

Student: Well the fully developed humanity is . . . .

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[i] Strauss responds to Mr. Weiss's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: No. I don't remember the paragraph, but I am reasonably sure that civil equity is the same as reason of state.[ii] That's to say, where the lawgivers establish the laws, or at least are capable of establishing the laws, with a view to what is useful in this situation. Yes?

Student: Useful in itself.

LS: Yes, but here for the people as a whole, you know,[3] because the equality of men is now recognized; there is no longer a bifurcation into an upper and lower class[4] by [different] nature[s][5], as[6] is characteristic of the early society. Whether it is done by a democratic assembly or an absolute monarch doesn't make any difference, because they both belong to the higher stage. Here I believe you were wrong, but look up the passage; try to find it and we'll discuss it next time.

Student: Okay.

LS: Now there was also one thing which you should have explained to the class as you referred to *hostis*. Citizen and *hostis*, which is a Latin word and not everyone here knows Latin.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but the ordinary meaning it has in classical Latin is, of course, enemy. Now, but the original meaning was stranger, and that means originally all strangers were enemies. That's the point. And this was connected to a fact to which you also referred, that Vico makes this strange etymology [LS writes on the blackboard]: *polis* comes from *polemos*. That, I must say, I had . . . for years before I read this in Vico, but it was in use in some passage in Plato;[7] I do not remember where this absurd etymology is suggested. You know, *polemos* has a different stem than *polis*. Now the joke has this serious meaning: the city is necessarily a particular society—[there are][8] frontiers, and therefore the possibility of war. I mean, there is no city without the possibility of war: that belongs to it, and to that extent one can say [that] polis—ironic with the impossible but helpful etymology—polis stems from *polemos*. And the understanding of *hostis* as us and them[9]. That's the fundamental distinction . . . .

Now you spoke at the beginning of your paper of a certain superiority of the plebs and natural right in the highest sense—I mean, where it becomes identical with rational right. That belongs to the plebian stage. I do not know whether you had made the latter remark, but you surely spoke of the superiority of the plebs and that they are—

Student: Yes . . . that the plebeians, at any given time, are relatively stupid—

LS: But[10] then there comes this Aesop—you know, that type of plebeian who sees through the swindle. Do you remember what he said about Aesop? He's a slave, the hunchback slave who is however clever, but he cannot express his criticism of the rulers and therefore he uses fables . . . .

[ii] Vico says this in paragraph 38. Strauss discusses it in session 4. He will return to this subject at the beginning of session 12.

Student: He uses[11] the example of Aesop to explain . . . .

LS: Ya, but that's in a former passage; we saw what the political meaning of that is . . . but are still very powerful, but sees the situation, that they have no right to rule because all men are equal. In that stage, the plebs expressed its criticism in this disguised form, of fables. But the [in] next stage, of course,[12] they act on that. So in other words, the plebs[13] [become] reasonable and[14] [become], in a way, superior to the patrician[s] in the course of this process. And this reminds us of the Hegelian construction, to which I referred earlier, that the locus of reason [is] [the] slaves, not the masters, because the masters fight and enjoy the booty; the people who work and have to apply their minds to what they produce, this is the progressive element in history.

So that there is—good. Now in a different form, we have this thought—in a very different form—but with the same political result, in Tocqueville: a progress of equality which began ages ago and which reached its spectacular climax in the French Revolution, but which goes on and will be victorious. Now, how does Vico stand to this view? To a kind of necessary progress from original aristocracy—and a very harsh one, to boot—to a final democracy. Hegel of course wasn't in favor of democracy, but in a sense his construction is nevertheless democratic. In other words, no democratic . . . but a democratic spirit, if one may say so. I mean[15] the free equality of opportunity is in fact admitted by Hegel, not the equality of political rights, which is a different story.

Now how does Vico stand[16] [toward] this prospect of a democratic, final democratic future?

Student: There's this tendency, what I think of is the conflict between the . . . eternal principle . . . .

LS: Ya, let us come to this very complex thing by something very simple. What[17] is the schema which he suggests?[18] Well, of course [you first have] the patriarchal order, prepolitical, then you have the early aristocracy, and then when this breaks down, when the plebs—

Student: Commonwealth—

LS: Democracy, and then? Absolute monarchy. And then? Decay; decay . . . . So in other words, there is no simple progression. It is this: from early bestial barbarism to this dissolution an . . . . And if democracy is the most desirable, it is only in a certain stage.

Now, then you referred to paragraph 585. Do you remember what you said in this connection? It was a statement about—read it again.

Student: I quoted this from the section. "And among all human possibilities, once it is seen that civil governments were not born either of fraud or of the violence of a single man, one cannot imagine any way but the one we have described by which civil power could emerge from family authority."

LS: Ya, in other words, and therefore—

Student: Because this was the natural way.

LS: Yes, yes, yes.[19] And I believe you added some criticism of your own later—but let us first see how he knew that. That the first society is the family, that was granted. It was the tradition and he simply accepted it. Why not the possibility that the independent families, on the basis of equality, unite and form the first civil society, political society? Why not that, in the way that Hobbes and Locke and Aristotle too, of course, thought of it—you know, that the families are unable to defend themselves properly and then they ally themselves and form then the first society? And they could do this in any way: democratically, oligarchically, or monarchically, that was certainly the traditional view. Now why is Vico dissatisfied with that?

Student: Well, he seems to think that the biggest struggle, the most important struggle, at this stage is between the ruler and the ruled, between people—

LS: But why not have these fellows in Hobbes' state of nature, to take the simplest example, each sitting in his foxhole and then calling to each other, something . . . [LS laughs]: Let's get out of here and live in peace, and go into houses, and so on . . . . Why not that?

Mr. Reinken: He holds, on the one hand, that the first family fathers—the Cyclopes—stayed apart from one another.

LS: Sure, well, all right, from the next cliff—

Mr. Reinken: The first fathers' state, the prepolitical, is relatively stable in that the fathers ruled their families without political authority, and do not need political authority because they do not have that much foreign relations with other families. Then when you get these *famuli* coming in who live closely and break down the fundamental isolation of the family—so there are people in the family but not of it—this poses a problem that the Cyclopes can only meet the rebellion of these *famuli* who are not sons—

LS: Let us assume there's an invasion by savage beasts and the individual Cyclopes sees that he cannot—and even with the help of his sons they cannot get rid of them; and they see that if the other Cyclopes, the other five, would help them—who[20] [are] after all also threatened by these lions, they would be better off. Now let us first hear Mr. Butterworth.

Mr. Butterworth: . . . I thought it was just simply because each one regarded the other as his equal and therefore wasn't going to pit his strength against the other—

LS: Yes, but still they might have to pit their strength against third parties. After all, this is a simple thing: that two Cyclopes are stronger than one. But what is Vico's objection in principle to this way of looking at it—say the Hobbean way, where they shout to each other from their foxholes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Pardon? No; they can't talk. They are not rational. That's the simple thing. Hobbes presupposes them to be much more rational than they are, and they have to become rational first. Now of course they do not become rational for a long time, but there is something else which is necessary for the transformation into civil beings, and that is in itself not rational but it is a condition of rationality, and that is some restraint. These bestial peoples, these bestial individuals, have to get the minimum of restraint. And since they are entirely irrational, the restraint is bound to be entirely irrational, and that is this superstitious fear. Now this superstitious fear[21] hits some men first and others later. And those who are hit first by it, these are the patricians. They are the people with some restraint. And restraint gives superiority, not only bodily superiority; to take the simple case, the man who is habitually drunk is on the whole weaker, even if he is a boxer, than the man who is not drunk, because he will be soon asleep so much of the time that he can easily be . . . in that state. But it gives not only more strength bodily, so to speak, but also moral strength, the feeling of superiority to the unrestrained. These are the patricians. And out of that, civil society can grow for the first time.

You also referred to natural sociality in this connection, Mr. . . . This was also not clear to me.

Student: Well, because the commonwealths came about in the way they do; the way the commonwealths did come about, he says, was the natural way.

LS: Ya, but this natural sociality is of course very different from Aristotle—

Student: The reason he says that men are naturally social is that they follow natural customs. And at the same time he says that this was the way the early commonwealths are governed—

LS: Ya, but that is not good enough. Because, I mean, when Aristotle says man is by nature social he means that however primitive and stupid man might have been in early times, he was a social animal; after all, there are other social animals, like bees. But man is by nature a social animal. There is no mechanism which makes a previously nonsocial human being into a social one. Now what Vico means by man's natural sociality is that there is a mechanism which is necessarily effective and makes men social. So what Vico says in effect is [that] man is by nature asocial, but this mechanism is necessarily effective and makes him social. Very different. And connected with this of course is the fact that Vico believes that man is possible without a language, whereas Aristotle denies that. Man cannot have been man without having a language of sorts. It might have been a very poor language, limited to "kill"—"go" and "kill" were, I think, the only words which Churchill knew when he was in command of the western frontier over a tribe whose language he did not understand.[iii] But these two words were absolutely necessary and he learned them [laughter].

Student: Mr. Strauss, the thing which makes man social in Vico is necessity, isn't it?

LS: Ya, but it is never fully developed yet. I mean, that man is a two-legged animal, for example, that is presupposed; or [that he has] two eyes, that belongs to his constitution, his primary constitution. But out of his primary constitution there develops a mechanism: sociality. It is derivative. I mean, in this respect also Spinoza is quite helpful, who says somewhere—it is a

[iii] That is, the western frontier of then-British India (now west Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan).

long time[22] [since] I've read it—so[23] at the end of the argument, so man can be said to be a social animal. It can be said that[24] this is the result of a process. It is not man's natural constitution. And in this sense, I think Vico, just as . . . regard man's sociality as acquired.[25]

Regarding the use of the term eternal by Vico, I would say: What does he mean when he speaks of eternal properties? Say, an eternal property is this patrician-pleb relation.

Student: Well, the eternal community of the . . . .

LS: Also that.

Student: Or the ruler and the ruled? I mean, this . . . it seems to me—would very well get the idea that he is proposing this as a permanent division, that this is a fact—

LS: But surely he speaks of things which are characteristic only of the early society. For example, the eternal property of fealty, of this kind of thing. What does the eternal mean here? There is not an eternal feudal society; it is only one stage. I think he doesn't mean more than an essential property of this nature: it is not necessary that there be feudalism, but if it[26] [exists], then it must have these qualities. I do not believe that he means more than that.

Student: But when he says the eternal principle of commonwealths, if there be[27] commonwealths, then there must be ruler and ruled.

LS: Ya. But it does not mean that there[28] always [will] be commonwealths.

Student: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: No, it doesn't.

LS: I think it means no more than essential. I mean, I'm willing to see this refuted, but as far as I could see,[29] he does not mean more.

Then you reflected on this passage where he speaks of political science, which rightly impressed you. I think that we [will] take it up when we come to this passage. In your statement on this subject, where you said that even Hobbes has a broader view of political science, you disregarded one point which is perhaps not immediately relevant for political science but surely not altogether irrelevant, namely this, that Vico does not reject moral philosophy, i.e. the way of life of the wise man as distinguished from the wild man. Now then, wise does not mean the foolish patrician, but the truly wise man. Then he accepts something which . . . or someone else like this had said is fundamentally sound. This I think he admits. But indeed, it has no direct relevance for politics because these wise people are so rare that you can for all practical purposes disregard them. In this respect, I believe that his view is very close[30] [to] that of Spinoza. But I repeat my special satisfaction with your paper.

Now we turn now to this assignment, poetic economy . . . . Yes?

Student: One question. Do you disagree with Mr. . . . on this question of where civil equity belongs, whether it was in the heroic or the third stage? At the beginning, didn't you say that you felt that civil equity was in the third stage rather—

LS: In the human stage.

Student: In the human stage. Paragraphs 38 and 39 [state] it very clearly—in putting civil equity in the heroic stage.

LS: Oh, oh, oh, "the Roman jurists spoke of *aequitas civilis* and we call it reason of state." Paragraph 38.

Student: Right.

LS: *We*; and the Roman jurists are the lay jurists of the human state of Rome, when Rome was an absolute monarchy.

Student: Doesn't he say—does he mean the second state, which is the heroic state?

LS: Well, let us have a literal translation from Mr. Rotella. Paragraph 38.

Mr. Rotella: "The second one happens to have been the heroic jurisprudence, all verbal scrupulosity of which was present in the prudent Ulysses, which guarded by the Roman jurisconsults was called *aequitas civilis* and which we call the reason of state. Through which, on account of their limited minds, they thought that such right belonged to them naturally which was that the same as we have explained with words."

LS: Ya, I admit that that passage is not as—

Mr. Rotella: It would have to be studied and cut apart—

LS: Yes. Now which was the other passage which you had in mind?

Student: Paragraph 39.

Mr. Reinken: "The last type of jurisprudence was that of natural equity, which reigns naturally in the free commonwealths, where the peoples, each for its particular good (without understanding that it is the same for all), are led to command universal laws. They naturally desire these laws to bend benignly to the least details of matters calling for equal utility. This is the *aequum bonum*, subject of the latest—" (39)

LS: Where is that? 39?

Reader: Yes, 39. He seems to[31] imply that it was early Roman jurisconsults who spoke of civil equity. That *aequum bonum* is the natural equity, which is the . . . kind.

LS: Ya. Does he call it the natural equity?

Mr. Reinken: Translation—

LS: But you see here when he speaks at the end of paragraph 39, the emperor Hadrian reformed the whole natural Roman—natural right with the *human* natural right of the provinces, and the human is of course that based on equality. Now but there was another passage, I do not know—much later, in which he spoke of that. 322?

Mr. Reinken: "The principle of strict law—"

LS: [3]22.

Mr. Reinken: 322. It speaks of "The principle of strict law. Its rule is civil equity, by whose certitude, that is to say by the determinate particularity of whose words," and so on.

LS: Yes, I see. But there is another paragraph, I think; let us look at paragraph 329. Natural equity. He calls it here natural equity: "in its best idea was understood by the gentile nations from their very beginnings." And this was a fundamental error, naturally . . . . But I think that there was another passage later, when he speaks of . . . somewhere, but he speaks of him quite a few times. No, that is not it; I am sorry. So for the time being, I retract what I said, but if I had anything true in mind, I hope it will reassert itself through the natural course of events. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: . . . before. It seems that eternal means something less than essential. That is, the essential properties manifest themselves eternally—

LS: If the thing exists.

Student: Yes, if the thing exists. But Vico, in using eternal for essential, rather than saying essential, means to make a weaker assertion . . . discussion of essence.

LS: That I do not know. It might. On the contrary, the claim is higher because when he speaks of eternal history it sounds more full than essential history. Shall we postpone it until we come to a passage which explains it?

Now let us turn to our assignment. Let us consider first paragraph 575.

Mr. Reinken: "This is perhaps the reason why emphyteusis is a contract *de iure civili*, that is, by our principles, *de iure heroico romanorum*," (by the heroic right of the Romans), "To this Ulpian opposes the natural right of the human peoples[iv]—"

[iv] The text of this final sentence fragment reads, "To this Ulpian opposes the *ius naturale gentium humanarum*, the natural law of human nations—."

LS: I would almost translate it "of the humane nations," "the humane peoples." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "as distinguished from that of the barbarous nations that preceded them, not from that of the barbarous nations outside of the Roman Empire in his own day, for their law was of no importance to Roman jurisconsults." (575)

LS: This refers to paragraph 561. Now let us see what he means. The things which the Roman lawyers declared to be *de iure civili* delivered it from civil right. The . . . according to Vico to the Roman heroic right, in contradistinction to the natural right of the humane nations. The question would then arise: Is then the Roman heroic right not natural? Of course it is natural, but it is a different natural right from that of the humane nations? But of course these early Romans—or, for that matter, early Greeks or any other gentiles—did not know that this heroic right which they had was natural, they knew it only as their right inherited from their ancestors. Only philosophy or history coming later can recognize it as natural. Is this clear? We had a paragraph to which Mr. . . . referred where Vico made a parallel between the private and public.[32] It was a private right of the Romans—I mean, the right peculiar to the Romans; another [was] peculiar to the Greeks. But when we [are] going over the evidence, look[ing] at it, we see that there are typical features common to all these early rights, and therefore we see that there is a natural heroic right. So that, I believe, is not difficult to understand. In 578, then.

Mr. Reinken: "But when the heroic law was succeeded by what Ulpian defines as that of the human nations—"

LS: The humane nations.

Mr. Reinken: The humane nations, "there was a revolutionary change. The contract of purchase and sale, which in ancient times did not guarantee recovery unless double recovery was stipulated in the contract, now became the queen of those contracts called *bonae fidei*, 'of good faith,' and the right of recovery obtained naturally even without stipulation." (578)

LS: Ya. There is a natural element in civilized right, of course. And in a way, it is more natural. This is, I think, what Mr. . . . means, that the natural equity, i.e. the equity based on natural reason alone, belongs to humane nations. Is that what you were trying—?

Student: Yes.

LS: Yes, yes. Let us see paragraph 582, towards the end.

Mr. Reinken: "For such nations, as we shall show later at greater length—"?

LS: We can begin, "This manifest error, or falsity, or untruth arises."

Mr. Reinken:

> This evident falsehood springs from the common vulgar error of which the scholars have been guilty in interpreting this statement; for it was made by the jurisconsults with reference to the nations conquered by the Roman people. For

> such nations, as we shall later show at greater length, having lost all their civil rights by the law of war, had left to them only natural paternal powers and, consequently, natural blood ties called those of cognation; and similarly only the natural property rights called bonitary; and hence on both these accounts only the natural obligations said to be by the natural right of nations[v], which Ulpian further specified as humane[vi]. But the civil rights these subject nations had lost must all have been possessed by the peoples outside the Roman Empire, precisely as the Romans themselves had them. (582)

LS: Ya. So[33] one can perhaps say this. I mean, I wonder whether it agrees with what Mr. Weiss found out. The clear rational right, if I may say so—i.e. the right belonging to humane or civilized peoples—is that possessed by the people subjected by the Romans as distinguished from both the Romans and the unconquered nations.[34] Is this the way you understood it?

Student: . . . these people, but they don't always have . . . .

LS: Yes, but still, he says here [that] he doesn't bring the issue of providence . . . . These are the natural rights proper because they have been deprived of these civil rights and they may not even have known it, these savages. But the Roman jurists, who were enlightened men, saw that these rights (I mean these natural rights) belonged to them as conquered people. So in other words, the true place of natural rights are the mere subjects, the mere plebs.

Student: . . . .

LS: In their case, a mere promise, a mere or firm promise—say a mere contract, without any particular formalities, is binding. In other words, if I contract with someone, with you or you with me, you would keep it as a matter of course although you had not signed your name on the dotted line, yes? This is what would be valid among reasonable beings. But I do not know whether I see through what he means. We must return for a moment to the beginning of this section—570. Let's read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "The heroic peoples were concerned only with the necessities of life. The only fruits they gathered were natural fruits, as they did not yet understand the use of money. There were—"

LS: He begins here by the most ancient right of the heroic gentiles, who did not care except for the necessities and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "They were so to speak all body. Hence the most ancient right of the heroic nations could certainly take no cognizance of the contracts which nowadays are said to be sealed by simple consent." (570)

LS: In other words, contracts of good faith.

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[v] Where Mr. Reinken says "by the natural right of nations," the text has the Latin "*de iure naturali gentium*."

[vi] Where Mr. Reinken says "humane," the text has the Latin "*humanarum*."

Mr. Reinken:

> They were extremely crude people and therefore suspicious, for crudeness is born of ignorance and it is a property of human nature that he who does not know is ever doubtful. For all these reasons they did not recognize good faith, and they made sure of all obligations by a real or fictitious physical transfer. Moreover, the transfer was made certain by solemn stipulations in the course of the transaction. Hence the celebrated article in the law of the Twelve Tables: "if anyone executes a bond or conveyance, as he has declared with his tongue, so let it be binding." And from this nature of human civil things the following truths emerge. (570)

LS: Ya. Here are the oldest rights of the heroic gentiles. They were savage to the highest degree. Does this not imply that the heroic age is the same as what is sometimes called the divine age? Because it would seem the beginning . . . the divine age where men were . . . . But here this is described as the heroic age. After all, as I have said before, the distinction between these two ages is vouched for only by Egyptian myth. Yes?

Student: He speaks later of some divinities being created by theological thought, and others being created by heroic thought. He says that Minerva was created by theological thought. He says in another place that Jove had been created by heroic thought.

LS: Ya, but since Jove was the first god,[35] the difficulty is who made these. If you assume that the gods are true agents—I mean, the gods lived with men as he presented it first. And then after the gods there come the heroes, the descendants of the gods. But this is of course not accepted by Vico. These gods are products of the human imagination. Do you see that?

Student: Yes, But I don't see . . . .

LS: Well, the original meaning of the first age is an age where gods lived on earth with men; the second, where heroes lived with men, descendants of gods. And the third is where there are no longer any gods or heroes living on earth, but only men. Only men. That is the meaning of the doctrine, the myth, which he adopts. This can of course not literally be true for him, because there were always only human beings. Is this clear? The first men who imagined Zeus, these were human beings, naturally. You would have to say then that the first age was the age when men believed in Jupiter, but that is not true because later on, in the republic, they also believed in Jupiter. What does the distinction of the three ages mean? And the clear distinction is that was an age in which men believed in inequality, in a radical inequality. The nobility were thought to be of an entirely different origin than the plebs. And from a certain moment on, this inequality of birth was no longer believed in . . . . I believe that is the only distinction which is really important.[36] And the question then is: What about the development *within* that early age? Now we have here a clear distinction [between] the prepolitical age (what he calls the state of families, the state of nature) and when they found[ed] the first aristocratic commonwealth. [37]Do you see that? This distinction is very clear. [LS writes on the blackboard] You had the early aristocracy, and then you had democracy and monarchy. Now these are the human age . . . . So the question is [LS writes on the blackboard]—let us call this human. But[38] does it make sense to say that this is the divine age, and this is the heroic age? That is the question.[39] But if this were so, then the

distinction would simply vary from Vico's own teaching—of course no longer in the Egyptian sense, but in his sense. But hitherto I have failed to see that it makes sense for him to call this first age, of the Cyclopes, the divine age, and the age of the united Cyclopes, patricians, [the] heroic age. But maybe he means it, but I have no evidence. I've seen more evidence of a fusion of these two stages. Mr. Weiss?

Mr. Weiss: I was going to say that when he[40] [discusses] the creation of the gods and says that the gods were created by men, he shows the confusion between the divine and the human ages, because he speaks of theological poets, and the heroic poets do the same thing.

LS: But you see, this I believe is a very confusing thing, the confusing character of which he was fully aware. On the one hand, he speaks of divine providence, and therefore the whole thing is ruled by god. But then he speaks also of the divine providence in terms of the gods actually believed in by these savages, like Jupiter, and he doesn't believe in a providence exercised by Jupiter, or Mercury, or Minerva. You see that? Therefore these people believed in their stupid gods, there's no question. But Vico does not believe in them, you know? And then either you have to rewrite the entire thing in terms of Christian theology or you have to rewrite [it] completely in terms of his New Science as the natural science. What is the difficulty which you have?

Mr. Weiss: Well, it just seems that when he used the term "theological poets" he meant poets of the theological age. And when he used the term "heroic poets" he means poets of the heroic age, except that in the context in which he uses it, they are confused. And in some cases the actions of the poets who are said to be of the heroic age come before the actions of the poets who are said to be in the theological age.

LS: Ya, that is what I mean, that he confuses—I mean, I have reached[41] [something of] an understanding by this simple schema: If he had meant it this way—the theological age is the age of the isolated Cyclopes, the fathers, and the heroic age is the age of the assembled Cyclopes, the early aristocracies—then he would have a bipartition corresponding roughly to the bipartition of the divine age and the human age. But since he confuses the bipartition of divine and heroic so frequently—and you gave another example now, theological poets following the heroic poets—then I thought . . . better to disregard it. But I don't claim to have understood this sufficiently. Surely one cannot leave it at the simple Egyptian scheme. This much, I think, is clear.

We turn now to paragraph 583.

Mr. Reinken:

> To return to our argument: when the sons of the families were freed by their fathers' death from this private monarchical rule, each son took it up entire for himself, so that every Roman citizen when free of paternal power is called a *paterfamilias* in Roman law. The *famuli* on the other hand went on living in that servile state. After a long period of time they must naturally have chafed under it, by the axiom set forth above that "subject man naturally aspires to free himself from servitude."

LS: This "naturally" is very important on each occasion. It is not lightly taken as a matter of course, because the whole process is natural. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Such must have been the Tantalus, above called plebeian, striving in vain to reach the fruit (the golden apples of the grain raised on the lands of the heroes, as above explained), and unable to slake his burning thirst with so much as a mouthful of the water which rises to his lips only to sink away again. Such also were the Ixion, forever turning the wheel, and Sisyphus pushing the rock uphill. (Like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, this rock was the hard earth, and its rolling back when it reached the top was preserved in the Latin phrases *vertere terram* for cultivating it and *saxum volvere* for painfully performing a long and arduous task.)

LS: In other words, all the early myths reflect political situations. They have no cosmological meaning or . . . . But the political relation, kind of a pre-Marxism. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For all these reasons the f*amuli* must have revolted against the heroes. And this is that 'necessity' which we conjectured generally in the Axioms to have been imposed by the *famuli* upon the heroic fathers in the state of the families, as a result of which the commonwealths were born." (583)

LS: So again, this necessity is of course also a natural necessity.[42] He first spoke of natural, and here he speaks of necessity. These two axioms to which he refers, in the first place it is—well, here I have to go by Nicolini; I have not gone over the whole. [43][Vico] doesn't identify the axioms as he easily could have done, because they are numbered. And well, Nicolini is supposed to have done the job, and he refers in the first place to paragraph 292, which is radically different from the formulation given here. This formulation doesn't seem to occur at all . . . .

Student: Bergin and Fisch refer to paragraph 261.

LS: Well, this is all from Nicolini. Oh yes, that cannot be done while you translate; that was a lifetime's work. And here in paragraph 261, let us see at 261; let us try to—

Mr. Reinken: "It is characteristic of the strong not to relinquish through laziness what they have acquired by courage. Rather do they yield, from necessity or for utility, as little as they can and bit by bit." (261)

LS: Ya, he omits here utility. It was the sheer pressure of the plebs.[44] The consideration of utility was implied in the necessity. If we do not . . . we lose everything else we have. You see? That is, I think, very revealing. So it would pay, without any question, if one would consider in each case the axiom or whatever he refers to. But this requires, since he doesn't give it—this man who repeats himself *ad nauseam* doesn't take this minor trouble of giving us exactly the correct reference to the axiom which he use[s].[45] Then it would be much easier. Strange procedure. Good.

Now let us turn[46] to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "For at this point, under pressure of the emergency, the heroes must naturally have been moved to unite themselves in orders—"

LS: He says here—a change in the expression: no longer *naturalmente* . . . but *per natura*. It's the same; natural development. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "in orders so to as to resist the multitudes of rebellious *famuli*. And they must have chosen as their head a father fiercer than the rest and with greater presence of spirit. Such men were called *reges*, 'kings,' from regere, which properly means 'to sustain' or 'direct!'" (584)

LS: Well, I will never make any notes about his etymologies because they are sometimes wrong, sometimes in agreement with what was then regarded to be the true etymology, and sometimes in agreement with what is now regarded as the true etymology. That's an infinite question. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "In this fashion, to use the well-known phrase of the jurisconsult Pomponius, 'things themselves dictating it, kingdoms were founded—'"

LS: That is another expression for nature and necessity: *rebus ipsis dictantibus*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "a phrase in keeping with the doctrine of Roman law which declares that the natural right of nations was established by divine providence."

LS: You see, divine providence, nature, *res ipse*: that's all the same thing. And therefore it can always be termed both ways: it can be given a pious expression and it can be given a nonpious expression. And you have to make up your own minds which of the two expressions is truer to what Vico intends. Yes? "And this—"

Mr. Reinken: "Such was the generation of the heroic kingdoms. And since the fathers were sovereign kings of their families, the equality of their state and the fierce nature of the Cyclopes being such that no one of them naturally would yield to another, there sprang up of themselves the reigning senates, made up of so many family kings." (584)

LS: By the way, this would now confirm something. The heroic kings are the kings in the already established commonwealth. And the divine kings would be the fathers of the prepolitical family.

Mr. Reinken: They would have . . . .

LS: Yes . . . . Yes, Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "These, without any human discernment or counsel, were found to have united their private interests in a common interest called *patria*, which— "

LS: You know, "common" isn't—Mr. Rotella, "*i loro privati interessi a ciascun loro comune*."

Mr. Rotella: Common to each.

LS: Common to each; that's a very interesting expression. Common to each. I will come to that later. Yes? And this was called *patria*, fatherland. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Common to each called *patria*, "which, the word *res* being understood, means 'the interest of the fathers.'"

LS: "The interest of the fathers." The affair, the *res patria* is *res patria*, the affair of the fathers, the interest of the fathers. And the fatherland is the fathers. The interest of the fathers. The private interest absolutely survives. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "The nobles were accordingly called patricians, and the nobles must have been the only citizens of the first *patriae* or fatherlands. In this sense we may regard as truthful the tradition that has come down to us which says—" (584)

LS: And so on. Here you see what he does with the tradition. When he, on the basis of his insight into human nature, reaches results which are in conformity with tradition, then the traditions are sound. Otherwise, they have to be radically reinterpreted. So some of the tradition about Sisyphus . . . is false, but properly interpreted, namely, as reflecting the fight between the patricians and the plebeians, they make sense. But this tradition of which he is speaking now makes sense as it was transmitted. So necessity is the same as nature, is the same as *res ipse*, as the things, the situations themselves, and the same as providence. Yes, but since this was constituted, as we have seen, without any *human* counsel, without any *human* providence,[47] this entitles one, if one wants to speak of providence, to study divine providence.

Now as for this expression which is so strange: that these were their private interests, they united their private interests to the common interest. But he adds "to each one's common interest." I happen to know two parallels for that. One is in Machiavelli; it's in the proemium to the *Discourses on Livy*, First Book, when he says: these things which I believe bring common benefit to each. In other words, the common good must be also each one's private good; otherwise the private individual lacks the incentive for the common good. The self-interest is fully preserved. And the other expression which I found [is] in an out of the way place, in Locke's *Essays on the Law of Nature*, edited by Leyden, page 206: *commune cuiusque utilitas*, the common utility of each.[vii] Which is, of course—no one would speak of the common good of each. The meaning is [that] if it does not remain beneficial to each individual, it will never be respected by him. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Somewhere in Vico there have been examples where he carried this out and explains the common good as containing—

[vii] Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. and trans. Wolfgang von Leyden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

LS: Yes, sure, everyone knows that. We have already seen . . . about the invisible hand, already in the *Autobiography*. But still, nevertheless, if something occurs to me which seems characteristic I will mention it to point it out. Good. Now[48] there is in the next paragraph— we cannot read the whole. He speaks toward the middle of the paragraph of the same Homer in so many—

Mr. Reinken: "Homer himself, as often as he mentions the heroes by name in his two poems, adds the fixed epithet 'king.' In striking harmony with this is a golden passage in *Genesis*—"

LS: The first time, I believe [LS laughs]. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "in which Moses, enumerating the descendants of Esau, calls them all kings, or rather, as the Vulgate has it, *duces*, 'captains.'" (585)

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. So that's for the first time—and of course, why can he do that? I think his irregularity is in a way perfectly irregular,[viii] because Moses speaks there not of the chosen people but of the pagan people of Esau. Why he speaks of kings here, that is hard to say because the Vulgate translates it in this case quite literally; the Hebrew text doesn't speak of kings at all. But this is . . . . Certainly we have made some progress in Vico as we see him beginning to speak of Moses having a golden utterance. Good.[49] Shortly thereafter, he speaks of the state of nature, but we will come across more important passages. At the end of this paragraph—it, I think, was the passage which Mr. Weiss quoted. So all possible human things—

Mr. Reinken: "And among all human possibilities, once we have seen that civil governments were not born either of fraud or of the violence of a single man (as we have already shown, and shall show more fully later)—"

LS: Yes, but he doesn't tire of saying this all the time, cross-reference back and forth without giving us a minimum of help which would be: Where? [Laughter] Good.

Mr. Reinken: "one cannot imagine any way but the one we have described by which civil power could emerge from family authority, or the eminent domain of civil states from the paternal natural domains (which, as we have indicated above, were *ex iure optimo* in the sense of being free of every private or public encumbrance.)" (585)

LS: Ya, now[50] let us turn to the next paragraph; we don't have to read the whole [thing]. He speaks first of Ops, the wife of Jupiter, and adds then, i.e. of the ruling order of these heroes. Do you have that? Who had arrogated themselves. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "of the reigning order of those heroes who, as noted above, had arrogated to themselves the name of gods. (For Juno by the law of the auspices was the wife of Jove understood as the thundering sky.) The mother of these gods, as said above, was Cybele, also called mother of the giants properly so called in the sense of nobles, and she was later taken—" (586)

[viii] Or perhaps Strauss said "perfectly regular."

LS:[51] Here now, Mr. Weiss, do you see that we get now the equation for which I was somehow groping? The polyphemes, the pre-political fellows—they are the nobles, and therefore this is the justification of the old Egyptian scheme, the Vichian justification. To repeat, the Egyptians gave us an age of the gods, an age of heroes, and an age of men [LS writes on the blackboard], originally meaning an age where the gods lived with men on earth. Then the heroes lived with men on earth, and then only the men among themselves. And of course Vico cannot accept this, because these gods do not exist for him, the pagan gods. So he must reinterpret, and the reinterpretation, this is the rational interpretation. There is an age of the families where the polyphemes, the Cyclopses each by himself rules his bunch, and they are the gods. And then when they form civil society, the first civil society, then they are the heroes; and when the age of equality comes, then the humans. That's it.[52] I believe that is the solution. Hitherto I[53] [have] not see[n] any objection to that. Yes, by the way in paragraph 606 I found a parallel with that.

Mr. Reinken: 106?

LS: 606.

Mr. Reinken: "Here began the first commerce in the world, from which this *Mercury* got his name. He was later regarded as the god of trade, as from his first mission he was held to be the god of ambassadors. And with evident truth it was said he had been sent by the gods (an appellation, as we have seen, applied to the heroes of the first cities) to men." (606)

LS: Ya, you see here it is again confused, because here the fathers, the polyphemes, already assembled in cities, are still called gods. Here it's confused. But, however this—do you see that it is confused? But so the impression of a confusion of these two ages remains justified, and yet it does make sense to make the distinction, and it rather is an obvious distinction between the pre-political age and the first political societies. Good. Yes, in the same paragraph, much later; at the end of this paragraph, 586, the last sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "Similar payments in labor or goods are still customary in the transactions of peasants."

LS: No, no. 586?

Mr. Reinken: Oh, I'm sorry.

LS: That's what I said.

Mr. Reinken: "The other principal custody is that of the frontiers, in which connection the Romans, until their destruction of Corinth, had observed an incomparable justice in war in order not to militarize the plebeians, and an extreme clemency in victory [Strauss is laughing] in order not to enrich them." (586)

LS: Ya. You see, that's beautiful, isn't it? In other words, the Romans were of utmost virtue, but this virtue was very shrewdly calculated. One can say, in the language of Machiavelli, [that] Vico reveals here the factual meaning, the factual truth—*verità effettuale*—of the Roman virtues.

Machiavelli has of course done this also, but he does it most simply in a passage where he speaks of the relation between Florence and Pistoia; and he speaks first of the Roman fraternity towards the Pistoians, and then he says: "in another place and for another purpose" (that's the literal reference which he makes). He shows what this fraternity truly was: it meant divide and conquer. I mean the fraternity was that they were on good terms with the two parties into which Pistoia was divided, but the fraternity consisted, in fact,[54] [in their keeping] these parties alive [laughter] and so . . . . so what appears to be fraternity reveals itself as shrewd calculation. Same here. We will find[55] [many] more such traces of Machiavellian . . . .

Now in the next paragraph he speaks of the fact that men, human beings, were originally the plebeians, in contradistinction to the gods or the patricians. What he has here in mind is a distinction which is quite obvious.[56] [In] Greek [it] is the distinction between *anthrōpoi* and *andres*—human beings and men, he-men, *hombres*; that they are as it were different breeds. And the radical expression of course is that they are gods and they are other than human beings. And here I think he has touched on something which . . . exist. By the way, I think now he's really [in line] with the interpretation of the Egyptian story. [Paragraph] 588. I think we should read that.

Mr. Reinken: "The fable goes on to relate that the priests of Cybele or Ops (for the first kingdoms were everywhere priestly, as we have said above, and shall show more fully later) conceal Jove. (From this concealment Latin philologians—"

LS: Yes, that word . . . . "Latium" from . . . . Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "and the Latin language preserved the history in its phrase *condere regna*, as we said before."

LS: Ya, ya. [LS laughs] Good. Vico has now come to serious matters.

Mr. Reinken: "for the fathers formed a closed order against the mutinous *famuli*, and the secrecy of this order was the source of what political theorists called *arcana imperii*.)" (588)

LS: Ya, it's the political theorists. You have men like the Emperor Tiberius, so let us simply say the politicians, or statesmen. That is what he does all the time. *Politici* in Latin are not state theorists or political philosophers, they are political men. I believe Tiberius coined it, I don't remember exactly; Tacitus speaks of it. Yes?

Student: Was it men of state?

LS: Ya, this is—let us stop here. Now the key point is the religious basis of the polis: the patricians are priests. Only by virtue of this religious claim could they retain their authority. But the origin of the city is war, as we see from the end of this paragraph, meaning here the war between the patricians and the plebeians, however—a class war, as Marx later on called it. Beginning of paragraph 590.

Mr. Reinken: "To this fable the philosophers later attached the most sublime of their metaphysical mediations: that the eternal idea in God is generated by God himself, or created ideas are produced in us by God."

LS: Ya, in other words, to the myths which expressed a very clear and simple political situation is given a metaphysical interpretation which is wholly absent from the early mythologists. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "But the theological poets contemplated Minerva under the idea of civil order, whence 'order' was the Latin term *par excellence* for the senate (which perhaps led the philosophers to consider it an eternal idea of God, who is naught else than eternal order)—" (590)

LS: Ya, now is this not a remarkable—the question is this: Is the eternal order the same as the eternal idea of god, or is the eternal order god? Now to some extent that can of course have a simple traditional meaning, according to which god *is* the divine law, *lex divina*—I'm sorry, *lex æterna*. This was the traditional teaching. But a theologian would not say this without some, "in a certain sense," without a qualification, because if it is simply identified it means of course to replace a personal being with an impersonal order. What Vico meant, I do not—Mr. Rotella, how do you understand the construction here: "*idea eterna di Dio, ch'altro non è che ordine eterno*"? Does the "*ch*'" refer to "*idea eterna di Dio*" or to "*Dio*"?

Mr. Rotella: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Rotella: The *idea*, the eternal idea, not God.

LS: No, it could not— I mean, it could not refer only to God, the "*ch.*'" "*idea eterna di Dio, ch'altro non è che ordine eterno.*"

Mr. Rotella: "Which is nothing else but the eternal order"

LS: If it were—

Mr. Rotella: . . . the idea of God, it can't also be . . . .

LS: The "*ch*'" cannot refer to "*Dio*", to "*Dio*" alone?

Mr. Rotella: . . . .

LS: It could. Yes, that's what I thought, it's an ambiguous expression. Good.

Mr. Rotella: No.

LS: Could not. How would it be for it to refer to "*Dio*" alone?

Mr. Reinken: Wouldn't it be "*chi*"? Is the "*ch*'" neuter or masculine?

Mr. Rotella: The what?

Mr. Reinken: The "*ch*.'"

LS: The "*ch*" with an apostrophe.

Mr. Rotella: . . . I think the "*ch*'" refers to eternal.

LS: To *idea eterna*.

Mr. Rotella: *Idea eterna* of God

LS: I see.

Mr. Rotella: Because the *Dio* modifies the *idea eterna*; it's a compound—

LS: How would it be in Italian if it were, "God who is nothing else except the eternal order"? *Dio*—

Student: . . . .

LS: [It] can also refer to God. Yes, that . . . . But it's not important. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: This doesn't seem to clear it up, because an adjective is there and the adjective is "*altro*," which is masculine.

Mr. Rotella: No, no, no. It would be the same thing for idea; that doesn't mean . . . .

LS: Good. Yes, that is what I thought. [There is a brief and inaudible exchange between students in the background.] Now let us read the next paragraph. We need only the next paragraph when he speaks of Dionysius Petau, at the end.

Mr. Reinken: "We may infer as much from one of the two great fragments of antiquity (entered in the Chronological Table and mentioned in the Notes upon it) which, to our good fortune, Denis Petau found embedded in Greek history before the heroic age of Greece and consequently in what the Egyptians called the age of the gods, which we are here investigating." (591)

LS: So in other words, the Greeks called the heroic age what the Egyptians called the divine age, is that it? This would of course go far to explain the confusion, because it goes back to the sources, yes? But this is not really important, then. In 592 he had spoken more than once of the stupidity of the early nations, and now in the next paragraph he produces again the praise of these early regimes, yes? At the end of 592 where he refers to Thucydides, who says—

Mr. Reinken: "And this is confirmed by Thucydides, who tells us that as long as the city was governed by the severe Areopagites it shone with the finest heroic virtues and carried out the worthiest enterprises, just as Rome did in the time when—"

LS: And so on. Let's go on, after the quotations on Rome, where he says "the people consisted of the nobles alone."

Mr. Reinken: "as the Roman people were called; for at their birth the peoples were composed only of nobles, who alone had the right to bear arms.) But Athens was cast down from this lofty state by Pericles and Aristides in favor of popular liberty, and Rome suffered a like fate beginning with Sextius and Canuleius, tribunes of the plebs." (592)

LS: Ya, so here you see[57] he adopts again the aristocratic form of judging, that the plebeian development was a *decline* from the high virtue stage, clearly contradicting what he had said before[58], for example in paragraph 191, [about the] extreme stupidity of this early age.

594, in the middle of the paragraph. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: We have found many forms of that; that's his judgment on the early—say, Romans, or Athenians, whoever they may be. [He] has, in traditional terms, high praise of the most ancient antiquity, as Machiavelli called it, and then also saying that this was the age when mankind [was] most stupid. This is one of the contradictions going through the whole book.

Student: Do you see any—

LS: No, this is relatively simple to understand. I believe that is a kind of adaptation to the tradition which then brings out all the more clearly his opposition to the tradition; a kind . . . . This is not a very important thing, because he could easily have attacked early pagans. But it is a kind of play he makes, I think, in order to draw attention to his position toward all traditions, not only the pagan tradition. Yes?

Student: Could it go back to the early paragraph where we spoke of both the best and the highest? Because the human good—

LS: Ya. No, that's a different [point]. I see, there are other contradictions, not [in] this passage, I believe, but [in] others when he speaks, for example, so negatively of Spinoza's sympathy for a trading society, yes, for hucksters, a huckster society; and then there are also—we will come of course . . . . In the middle of paragraph 594, he says that the highest *imperium* of the laws follows[59] the highest *imperium* of the arms—do you have that? In the middle of 594.

Mr. Reinken: "People generally, Tacitus tells us—"?

LS: No, before that. "They armed." No, after the Tacitus quotation, after that.

Mr. Reinken: "Hence among the ancient Germans, whose custom allows us to assume the like for all the first barbarous peoples, we find the kingdom of the Egyptian priests, we find the kingdoms of the Curetes, or armed priests—"

LS: No, before, before. This passage where he speaks of the Germans themselves on the basis of Tacitus, yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This showed a just sense of the fitness of things, for the heroic assemblies were armed for dealing out penalties because the supreme authority of the laws follows the supreme authority of arms." (594)

LS: Does this remind you of an earlier statement?

Mr. Butterworth: Might makes right?

LS: No. Ya, but in this particular form: arms first, and laws afterward. Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, very clearly. I forgot the exact—but that's the point. Machiavelli states that where there are good arms there will be good laws, so you don't have to worry about laws; but the primacy of arms is surely asserted. Yes. And the first commonwealth . . . again, armed priests. So the priests alone won't do; they must be armed. Let us turn to paragraph 597. Read the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus the first cities were made up solely of nobles, who were in command. But because they had need of others to serve them, by a common sense of utility the heroes were constrained to satisfy the multitude of their aroused clients."

LS:[60] You see the common sense of utility; that's the term which we found, and he will refer to [it] again in paragraph 602, and at the beginning of 603. Read only the beginning of 603 for an authentic interpretation.

Mr. Reinken: "The Romans had an intuitive sense—"

LS: No, no, it shouldn't say that; "had *sensed*," if not "understood," yes? I mean, you somehow take away the force; common sense is understood, as Mr. . . . made clear in his paper, in contradistinction to intellect, to common intellect. Yes, we have seen—and here in the middle of this paragraph when he speaks, after he mentions Ceres: "This law was dictated from this . . . from the following natural right of the nations"—do you have that? 597. It's always the same . . . .

Mr. Reinken: "This law was dictated by the following natural right of nations: since ownership follows power—"

LS: That corresponds to the relations, are identical to the relation of arms and laws, yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and since the lives of the *famuli* were dependent on the heroes who had saved them by granting them asylum it was lawful and right that they should have a similarly

precarious ownership, which they might enjoy as long as it suited the heroes to maintain them in possession of the fields—" (597)

LS: Ya, this is . . . because it shows again what he understands by natural right: natural right is always the specific one. The natural right of this epoch differs from the natural right of another epoch, therefore *this* natural right of the gentiles. Power precedes property. Now of course the question is: Is this particular natural right limited to the heroic period? Or is this not also true, if in a modified manner, of civilized society, that power precedes property? I mean, power here in the sense of public power. In other words, is there any property in civilized society which does not presuppose a civil sovereign who guarantees property? This question is here involved. Let us turn to the next paragraph, beginning, 599.

Mr. Reinken: "In such fashion, in part from the nature of the strong to preserve their acquisitions, and in part from the nature of the benefits which can be looked for in civil life (on which two natures of human things, we said in the Axioms, the eternal principles of fiefs were founded, the commonwealths were born in the world with three kinds of ownership—" (599)

LS: And so on. Ya—three, everything is three here; that is . . . . So two natures of human things which are at the bottom of the eternal principles of feudalism. Feudalism of course is a typical phenomenon and not a unique phenomenon, that's implied. Paragraph 601.

Mr. Reinken: "The second was quiritary ownership of noble, heroic, or armed fiefs, nowadays called military; for the heroes, when they united themselves in armed orders kept their sovereignty over their farms. This was what had been in the state of nature the best ownership—"

LS: Ya, now you see clearly what "state of nature" means here. Now finish the sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "which Cicero, as we said before, recognizes in his *Responses*— " (601)

LS: And so on. That's too long.

Mr. Reinken: Ownership of real estate.

LS: There had been full, complete ownership,[61] which had been in the state of nature; they are no longer in the state of nature. The state of nature is the pre-political state; I believe that goes through—. The prepolitical state. But this does not mean that the political state, the various stages of them are not in their way as natural as the state of nature. That's the key point.[62] Spinoza versus Hobbes . . . . you said? Yes. Good. Now go on; omit the quotation from Cicero.

Mr. Reinken: "On this there is a golden passage in the Pentateuch where Moses relates that in the time of Joseph the priests of Egypt did not pay the king tribute on their fields." (601)

LS: Ya, the second time that we have a "golden" quotation from the Bible. But again—what?

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, the gentiles. He speaks of the Egyptians, not of the chosen people. So he hitherto has[63] absolutely stuck to his rule not to quote the Bible, and the two exceptions which we have hitherto found prove the rule, because these are not biblical passages on the chosen people but on the same gentiles with which Vico is concerned. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Why does he say the Five Books of Moses here, the Pentateuch, rather than saying the—*Genesis*, which he's—

LS: I don't know; I was struck by that too, because it is in *Genesis*, of course. I do not know.

Mr. Butterworth: Because he said it very clearly the last time when he referred to—

LS: Yes, that's true. I mean, this is one of the innumerable questions to which I do not have an answer, but it is surely a legitimate question. Good. And now let us turn to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The third, with full propriety called civil ownership, was that which the heroic cities, composed in the beginning of heroes only, had over the lands by certain divine fiefs which the family fathers had previously received from the provident divinity, as we have shown above (in virtue of which they had found themselves sovereigns in the state of the families, and had united themselves in reigning orders in the state of the cities); and thus they became sovereign civil kingdoms subject to the supreme sovereign God, whose providence is recognized by all sovereign civil powers.

LS: Ya, but we know now what this means: *de jure*, not *de facto*, because the pagans did not recognize *the* highest sovereign God, but . . . Jupiter, or whomever it was. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This is made plain to human understanding by the explicit avowal—"

LS: Not by "human understanding"; by "*sensi umani*"—so the human senses, not the intellect.

Mr. Reinken: The human senses "by the explicit avowal of sovereign powers in adding to their titles of majesty such phrases as 'by divine providence' or 'by the grace of God,' through which they must publicly profess to have received their kingdoms."

LS: And you know, therefore it is visible to the senses because it is publicly professed. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "So that if worship of providence were forbidden, the natural consequence would be their fall, for a nation of fatalists or casualists or atheists never existed in the world, and we saw above that all the nations of the world, through four primary religions and no more, believe in a provident divinity." (602)

LS: Ya, but the four, really of course are paganism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Now let us go on in the second—in about the middle of the[64] [paragraph], when he gives his quotations in Latin, and these phrases with which the oppressed implored—

Mr. Reinken: "used by the oppressed to implore on their behalf the 'force of gods and men,' which the Italians rendered in the human sense 'the power of the world.'"

LS: Ya. In other words, "power of the world" implies "force of gods and men." Yes. Later on, in the next sentence, which is quite long, he speaks: "the center of which was felt, if not reasoned," yes? And still later: "one has then to say that the civil powers are the lord of the substance of the peoples." Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken: "The center of this force—"

LS: No. Later, later. "One has therefore to say that the civil powers are the lords of the substance of the peoples"—yes?

Mr. Reinken: "which sovereign powers have over the lands of which they are lords, and for this reason—" Oh, I'm sorry. "Hence it must be said that civil powers are masters of the substance of their peoples—"

LS: In other words, *potestas publica*, public power, does precede property in civil society. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> which sustains, contains, and maintains all that is above it, and rests upon it. In virtue of its being one part of this substance—a part taken *pro indiviso*, or in its undivided whole (to use the scholastic expression for a legal distinction)—in the Roman laws the patrimony of each family father is called *substantia patris* or *paterna substantia*. This is at bottom the reason why sovereign civil powers may dispose of whatever belongs to their subjects: their persons as well as their acquisitions, their works and their labors, and impose thereon tribute or taxes, whenever they have to exercise that dominion over their lands—

LS: In other words, full Hobbean sovereignty. Yes, full Hobbean sovereignty, regardless of whether it is vested in the *demos* or in a monarch—that is uninteresting. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "which, from different points of view but with the same meaning in substance, moral theologians, and writers on public law now call eminent domain, just as they now speak of the laws concerning this domain as the fundamental laws of the realm." (602)

LS: Ya, but see now all [the] traditional terms—pre-Hobbean terms, "the fundamental laws." And from Hobbes' point of view, there is strictly speaking no fundamental law, i.e. a law by which the sovereign is bound . . . . The older version, the Bodin version of sovereignty, means the sovereign is absolutely free within the limits of the fundamental laws of the land, say, the Salic law in France—no women may become kings—or other laws of this kind. But the strict doctrine of sovereignty as developed by Hobbes says there is no fundamental law except that

implied in sovereignty, that the sovereign must[65] keep intact the sovereignty, which he fully adopts. Go on, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken: "Since this dominion is over the lands themselves, sovereigns naturally may not exercise it save to preserve the substance of their states, on whose stability or collapse hinges the stability or ruin of all the private interests of their peoples." (602)

LS: In other words, he cannot take away land merely for his private pleasure. That is impossible. But why is this an irrelevant qualification? Who is the judge? No writ can run against the sovereign, and therefore it is absolutely—whether the king takes away that land because, say, he wants a flower garden or pleasure garden for himself, or to build a fort on it, only the king can say. He's the judge of it—whether it's in the public interest or not, according to the strict doctrine. Now he doesn't go sufficiently into details. Now he speaks again here, as we have seen, of the necessary religious character of nations or cities, and that this has its origin in the pre-political life in the state of nature because these men, these *patres*, patricians,[66] brought the religion with them into civil society. Now this religious character is based on[67] sentiment as distinguished from reason. Yes. Now in paragraph 603, toward the middle of that very long paragraph, which—you said 602 was the longest, Mr. . . .

Student: I said it was one of the longest.

LS: One of the longest, sure.

Mr. Reinken: Could I add something?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: The progress from 600 to 602—it seems to be going in a very unusual direction. It starts from human fiefs, and he finishes up with this highest development, taking about, "ruled by divine grace."

LS: Ya, but this has this meaning: since the origin of all civilization, and hence also of all civil society, is religion, this will be preserved in all stages; and therefore the divine origin of power is still recognized in these formulae "by the grace of God." I think he doesn't mean more. In other words, in the human stage the divine character of authority, the divine origin of authority, is still recognized, as he[68] [says] all the time. Usually he speaks against Bayle's assertion, who had said that an atheistic society is possible. This is, I believe, nothing new. Now in paragraph 603, in the second part of that long paragraph, "all the private patrimonies."

Mr. Reinken: Before or after "*Lex Poppaea*"?

LS: Before that, the sentence before.

Mr. Reinken: "For those who founded Roman law in the process of founding the Roman commonwealth itself, gave to all private patrimonies the status of fiefs, such as writers on feudal

law describe as *ex pacto et providentia*, meaning that they all come from the public patrimony, and, by pact and providence of the civil laws—"

LS: You see, here it's not a [divine] providence, [it's] a providence of civil laws, i.e. a human providence. The providence underlying property in civil society is a providence of the civil laws, yes? Read a bit further on, after the quote in Latin, *tamquam omnium parentem*—Tacitus.

Mr. Reinken: "By which phrase this profound Latin writer recalls the reason of all the caducary penalties from the most ancient times when the first father of the human race occupied the first vacant lands. Such occupation was the original source of all ownership in the world." (603)

LS: You see here the universal character of the statement: the first fathers of the human race, not only of the gentiles. The distinction between the Hebrews and gentiles is here dropped, and this is of course not an accident because there are quite a few parallels, as he gradually shows, between Old Testament law and pagan law. Paragraph 609, a few more—

Mr. Reinken: "In this fashion the first cities were found to have been based on orders of nobles and multitudes of plebeians, with two contrary eternal properties emerging from this nature of human civil things which we are discussing: namely, [1] that the plebeians always want to change the form of government, as in fact it is always they who do change it, and [2] that the nobles always want to keep it as it is." (609)

LS: To preserve. In other words, the conservative upper class and the progressive and revolutionary lower class—amazing that this very modern way of putting it [appears]. Now what would earlier political thinkers have said about that, that the upper class is always defending vested interests, i.e. conservative, and the lower class is always bent on change. Yes?

Student: Did the older thinkers . . . in the case of rich and poor?

LS: Yes. In the first place, yes. Yes, but still I mean the classic discussion of the thing is the Fifth Book of Aristotle's *Politics*, about changes. Now is there any suggestion there that the changing element is the lower class and the preserving element is the higher class? No. Changes in both directions are possible. After all, there have been cases in which the people who wanted to preserve were the common people, namely, in a democracy; and then the people who wanted to change were some tyrannically inclined fellows, and in addition—for example, in the Greek history of the fifth and fourth century it's the common case, and in Rome too. After all, what Caesar began and Augustus finished was not exactly a democratic mission. No, this is a part of the . . . which Vico introduces by virtue of these simple schema which he has of the various stages. But of course this is much too crude to correspond to what he says; a more refined schema nevertheless he maintains throughout. And so this was a good example. In 610, this was the passage which Mr. Weiss used very much. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Here appeared two divisions. The first was that between the wise and the vulgar; for the heroes founded their kingdoms on the wisdom of the auspices, as we stated in the axioms—"

LS: Ya, you must see what kind of wisdom that is, Mr. Weiss; that is not what Vico understands by wisdom.

Student: . . . available at the time.

LS: At the time, yes. But it is of course a very crude wisdom. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> As a result of this division the vulgar received the fixed epithet profane, for the heroes or nobles were the priests of the heroic cities, as certainly they were among the Romans as late as a century after the Law of the Twelve Tables, as we have stated above. Hence the first peoples when they took away citizenship used a kind of excommunication, such as the interdict of water and fire among the Romans, which we show later. For the first plebs of the nations were considered foreigners, as we shall gradually see, and from this came the eternal property of not granting citizenship to a man of alien religion. (610)

LS: Ya, now let me stop here. The first equation is the patricians—they are the wise, and wise in divine wisdom—and the priests. And in a way, this remains preserved throughout the ages: political society, as we have seen before, is always religious, i.e. it has an established religion, to use present-day language, excluding men of different religion[s] from citizenship. Good. And now let us come to paragraph 611, and then we will finish and continue next time, and I will leave you a kind of problem then. So then he speaks[69] of the other distinction, that of citizen and stranger, equal to enemy. And then he give some examples: Paris, and then comes Theseus. Yes? "He was the guest." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Similarly, Theseus was the guest of Adriane, and Jason of Medea. Both abandoned the women and did not marry them, and their actions were held to be heroic, while to us, with our present feelings, they seem, as indeed they are, the deeds of scoundrels."

LS: "Of criminal men"—*uomini scelerati*. So, here we are; that's his judgment of the heroic age. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "In like fashion must the piety of Aeneas be defended, for he abandoned Dido, whom he had violated—" (611)

LS: And so on. So in other words, [70]that was of course a criminal action, but it[71] can be defended because it was a heroic act fitting that age. But from [a] sound point of view it is . . . . Now I believe this has to be applied also to what he has said in the preceding paragraph as well as in paragraph 562, namely, if in the preceding paragraph we have seen [that] religious intolerance is essential to society, but there are degrees of that. In 562 we found a remark—let us read the beginning of 562.

Mr. Reinken: "In this connection gentile poetic imagination created two other major other divinities, Mars and Venus. The former was a character of the heroes as first and properly fighting for their hearths. This sort of fighting was always heroic—"

LS: Ya, but don't forget what we have learned now about "heroic." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "for it was fighting for their own religion, upon which mankind falls back when all natural help is despaired of. Whence the wars of religion are most sanguinary." (562)

LS: Yes. In other words, that corresponds, I think, to what he said here in paragraph 611: heroic actions are criminal actions. This seems to lead to the conclusion that the religious intolerance and religious wars are also to be condemned.[72] I have another reference here, I do not know how important it is—and this is of course an utterance not very surprising in the eighteenth century, indeed, the century following the terrible religious wars of the seventeenth. Yes, that's too long; you should consult paragraph 191, the criticism of Lucretius there. Now here[73] we get some inkling of his way of doing things. He very frequently praises the heroic times; I mean the usual stuff about the virtue of the ancient Romans in the early republican period. But this conceals a very radical critique of the heroic times, which comes to the fore here more clearly, I believe, than ever before. But to some extent it had already come out before, because he had mentioned all the time that they are particularly narrow, stupid, irrational. This is, I believe, the strongest statement against the heroic age which we have found. And we must keep this in mind. The question which we would have to solve is, of course: Why does he proceed in that manner? Why does he not set forth a straightforward attack on heroic morality, but conceals it by a partial praise of it? Incidentally one of these . . . occurs in paragraph 612, near the beginning[74] when he quotes his formerly published *Principles of Universal Right*, "and these things give the ultimate luster to what we have published many —" Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And they give the final touch to what we printed many years ago in our *Principles of Universal Law* concerning the fable that the Law of the Twelve Tables came from Athens to Rome, which is one of the two passages that permit us to believe that that work was not entirely useless." (612)

LS: That has of course to be considered for any interpretation of Vico's *Principles of Universal Right*. He as it were disclaims everything except these two passages. Nicolini completely disregards that, but I suppose the other Vico scholars will do the same; this is an authentic piece of information which we cannot minimize. I think we will call it a day at this point because it is twenty-to-six, and finish our discussion of this next time, and at the same time—who will read the paper next time? Oh, Mr. . . . Good.

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "I think."
[2] Deleted "is."
[3] Deleted "not merely—."
[4] Deleted "as."
[5] Moved "different."
[6] Deleted "as."
[7] Deleted "which."
[8] Deleted "the."
[9] Deleted "we and they."
[10] Deleted "then there comes this age."

[11] Deleted “in.”
[12] Deleted “is that.”
[13] Deleted “becomes.”
[14] Deleted “becomes.”
[15] Deleted “every has opportunity—.”
[16] Deleted “at.”
[17] Deleted “is the schema of him—what.”
[18] Moved “You first—.”
[19] Deleted “But why—.”
[20] Deleted “is.”
[21] Deleted “that.”
[22] Deleted “that.”
[23] Deleted “men can—.”
[24] Deleted “the meaning is—.”
[25] Deleted “for.”
[26] Deleted “is.”
[27] Deleted “a.”
[28] Deleted “is.”
[29] Deleted “that.”
[30] Deleted “with.”
[31] Deleted “speak of—.”
[32] Deleted “Private and public.”
[33] Deleted “the clear—.”
[34] Deleted “Did you—.”
[35] Deleted “But who—.”
[36] Deleted “To what extent—.”
[37] Deleted “But I fail to see.”
[38] Deleted “can one—.”
[39] Deleted “I don’t—.”
[40] Deleted “puts the discussion of.”
[41] Deleted “somewhat a.”
[42] Deleted “There are natural necessities bring nature—.”
[43] Deleted “he.”
[44] Deleted “And no—.”
[45] Deleted “and.”
[46] Deleted “now.”
[47] Deleted “and.”
[48] Deleted “let—.”
[49] Deleted “In the same—.”
[50] Deleted “we come—.”
[51] Deleted “Let us—Yes, let us—.”
[52] Deleted “I think—.”
[53] Deleted “do.”
[54] Deleted “that they kept.”
[55] Deleted “much.”
[56] Deleted “from—especially.”
[57] Deleted “here.”
[58] Deleted “of this.”
[59] Deleted “the follows.”
[60] Deleted “This.”
[61] Deleted “Now—.”
[62] Deleted “Hobbes versus—.”
[63] Deleted “been.”
[64] Deleted “chapter.”
[65] Deleted “guard—.”
[66] Deleted “who.”

[67] Deleted “the.”
[68] Deleted “said.”
[69] Deleted “then.”
[70] Deleted “it must be.”
[71] Deleted “has to—.”
[72] Deleted “In paragraph—.”
[73] Deleted “we see—.”
[74] Deleted “when he speaks of—.”

Session 12: November 6, 1963

Leo Strauss: I have read your paper,[i] and I have very little to add now, except I mean we have to take up the text to which you referred. There was only one point which has not occurred to me at all and where you may well be right: that his doctrine implies the denial of innate ideas. Now who is the classic . . . of the denial of innate ideas? I mean, in the ordinary mythology. You know what I mean by mythology, what you—who is it?

Student: Locke?

LS: Sure, Locke. Of course Hobbes and Leibniz as well. But there is a famous saying of Aristotle or attributed to Aristotle, which, if I remember well, says—(I can't remember . . . with Vico, with the whole part of this book which we have read): Nothing is in the intellect which has not previously been in the senses. Does he not quote that somewhere? He does.[ii]

Student: Yes, he does.

LS: Yes, so this would confirm your point. Now this applies to Aristotle, but it is not quite literally true of Aristotle, and one can say that Leibniz has restored the original meaning against this Lockean view: *nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensibus nisi intellectus ipse*. "Nothing is in the intellect which has not been in the senses, except the intellect itself." So in other words, the principle of contradiction is not derived from . . . that, as it were, the intellect itself.[1] The importance of Locke was clear to me throughout, but this point[2] [was not] clear to me and I am very grateful to you for drawing my attention to it. Now did you want to add something? Well, you should try to find this statement, and you can do[3] [so] if you[4] [consult] the index. But there is no index in that, I believe, only a list of names[iii]—Aristotle, of course, there are many references to Aristotle; it might take you an hour to trace it. But these things . . . .

But first I am anxious to restore my reputation with you regarding a subject where I [LS laughs] admitted defeat last time . . . . I[5] made some effort to trace it and here we are. It concerns civil equity. Paragraph 320.

Mr. Reinken: "Golden is the definition which Ulpian assigns to civil equity: 'a kind of probable judgment, not naturally known to all men' (as natural equity is) —"

LS: So natural equity[6], as it were, does not require any training of the mind. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "'but to those few who, being eminently endowed with prudence, experience, or learning, have come to know what things are necessary for the conservation of human society.' This is what is nowadays called 'reason of state.'"[iv] (320)

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper. The paper does not seem to have been read aloud in the session.

[ii] The passage in question is from paragraph 363.

[iii] Strauss evidently refers to the Bergin and Fisch edition assigned for the course.

[iv] The Italian text reads not "nowadays" but "in beautiful Italian," as Strauss is about to imply.

LS: . . . the original which in good Italian or beautiful Italian is called "reason of state." So[7] that is the passage which I thought of. This theme is developed in the three following paragraphs, but this, I think, is the statement which I had in mind: civil equity is, on the highest level anyway, reason of state. On a lower level this reason of state, i.e. the utility of society, is irrationally interpreted, interpreted on the basis of irrational assumptions, the chief assumption being of course the inequality of men. In heroic society the utility of society is, in fact, the utility of the patricians. In a human society in his sense—non-heroic—where the equality of all men is recognized, it will be the utility of the whole society and not only of the ruling strata. That's the difference. This is the passage which I couldn't find last time, but which I remembered. Mr. Miller?

Mr. **Miller**: . . . .

LS: Leibniz. Leibniz's. I do not even remember now if Leibniz even claimed to restore what Aristotle said. In fact he did it. That was his criticism of Locke. Locke is quite right, except he forgets the most important thing. Yes?

Student: The passage in Aristotle is—

LS: In the *De anima*?

Student: 263[v] in . . . .

LS: I see. Thank you. Mr. . . . , take note of that. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. **Butterworth**: I thought that last time when we were[8] talking about civil equity you were arguing that civil equity was something which belonged only to the natural state.

LS: No, no, no. I—

Mr. **Butterworth**: So your argument then was that it comes after natural equity.

LS: No, the correction which I have to make on the basis of the passages discussed last time is that there is also a kind of civil equity in the earlier stages. But in its full sense as defined by this famous Roman lawyer, Ulpian, it belongs to the human stage.

Mr. **Butterworth**: That I don't see, because what he said in the passage which you just read seems to agree perfectly with what he said in paragraph 38.

LS: No, [it is] not so clear, if you would compare them. Not so clear.[9] Lest we forget, the framework that we have developed is this. [LS writes on the blackboard] The Egyptian scheme: the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, and the age of men. Now this must be rewritten on the basis of what we have learned. The state of nature: we can call that the time of the Cyclopes, of families. This, the heroic stage, is that of the aristocracy in the sense defined by him, the

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[v] The relevant reference to Aristotle is in paragraph 363, which is perhaps what the student said: the quality of the audiofile is poor.

assembly of the Cyclopes. You know, the Cyclopes form a society of patricians. Of patricians.[10] This age is based on the premise that the patricians are a different breed than the plebs. They are descendants from the gods. The others are mere human beings, lousy creatures. And here the equality of all men, of all members of the human species, is recognized in [the] human age. Here there is a bifurcation: first democracy, and then monarchy.[11] I think we can forget about the Egyptian myth now; this is more intelligible, obviously. This I think we should always keep in mind. Yes.

Now[12] we haven't finished our assignment[13] [from] last time, and we have to return to paragraph six hundred—where was that? 611, where we have found the clear identification of heroic actions, these criminal actions. Now this means, of course, that in the heroic age the heroes didn't know that they were criminals. It was their piety, their morality. But when human reason has developed, these actions are seen to be—not merely believed to be—are seen to be criminal. And this is connected with the status of religious intolerance. Religious intolerance is a heroic concept, i.e. one which is no longer defensible in the human stage. This does not mean that it will not still be very powerful.

One could here also refer to paragraph 109, where it is said [that] the natural right of the nations permits civil property to strangers.[14] It permits civil property, that is to say full property, not merely bonitary, [but] full property rights to strangers—which is of course impossible in the heroic age. This natural right mentioned in paragraph 109 is of course a natural right of the human stage.[15] Vico absolutely leaves [it] to us in each case to find out which natural right he is speaking of. Who said that to me—was it Mr. Reinken or someone who went home with me last time? Who was that? Oh, Mr. Nicgorski, I'm sorry that I mistook you—that part of the teleology of Vico is of course derived from the tradition. And the[16] Roman law spoke in a very complicated and unclear manner of the relation of natural right and the *ius gentium*, the right of nations. These are the [LS writes on the blackboard] there's . . . and there's . . . . And of course the relation of these things is very obscure. The most famous statement is that of Ulpian, according to which the natural right is that which nature taught all families, like[17] the generation of offspring and the raising of offspring. And *ius gentium* is always human, distinctively human, i.e., it is no less natural, but it is limited to humans. You find in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* in the second part, question 57,[18] [his effort] to reconcile this Roman law distinction with the Aristotelian teaching about natural right. That is perhaps the most important text.

Now what does Vico do? Vico takes over this term . . . . If you would retranslate the Italian into Latin you would get *ius gentium*. And he says they are identical. But what does he do? In the first place, he translates *gentium* differently. That doesn't mean the nations, it means the gentiles . . . . And the second thing which is, in a way . . . important is that he says that these are *n* rights of the gentiles. [LS taps on the blackboard] Here, here and here. But that he chooses a traditional term—the traditional terminology which evokes recollection is of course one of the tricks, as Tacitus said somewhere, quoted by Bacon in a very visible place: *eadem magistratuum vocabula*.[vi] Then Augustus made this complete change from the pre-commonwealths to the

[vi] "The same names of the officials" or, more loosely, "the officials kept the same names." Tacitus uses this phrase in *Annals*, I.3, and Strauss discusses Bacon's use of it in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 183.

principate—[to] the despotism, we can almost say. But the name of the magistracies remains the same. So the name remains the same, but the meaning is radically different.

So we have to be awake all the time. Even when he speaks of civil equity, we have to ask: Which civil equity does he mean now?[19] One can say this: civil equity means always reason of state, but it may mean reason of state irrationally interpreted (like here [LS taps on blackboard]) or reason of state rationally interpreted as the Roman lawyers of the imperial time did it and as Vico himself would want to understand it.

Let us now turn to 629, or did you have another point, Mr. . . .

Student: There were two aspects that I checked in the *Cambridge History* on *ius gentium*. Discussing this development of that body of Roman law, they point out that it developed as the praetor . . . attempted to find a law with which to deal with the foreigners—

LS: Between Roman citizens and foreigners or between foreigners?

Student: And as it turned out,[20] in time this body of law affected the Roman *ius civile*, the civil law, so that in a way, when Vico talks about[21] the law of the heroic stage, that particular law, in time being broadened and affected by the natural law of the gentiles understood in the third, human stage. It seems that this notion of *ius gentium* is very important to him and that this is—.

LS: Sure. There is no question. Well, but the very simple difference—I mean, the medieval interpretation of the distinction between *ius natura* and *ius gentium* is of course not necessarily the original meaning. And the original meaning is that, what you said, but nevertheless it has something to do with it because being what the praetor did in deciding questions among foreigners or among Roman citizens and foreigners (of course, very much in matters of trade, naturally), [it] was much less formalistic; and he was guided by natural equity—by equity and not by the complicated Roman laws. And therefore the key question is regarding contracts. The *bona fide* contract is a contract, which was not recognized in the old Roman civil law. So it was more rational than the Roman law, than the proper civil law. To that extent, it makes sense[22] to identify the *ius gentium* with the *ius natura*, because it is guided only by what the things themselves dictate and not by any complicated notion of sacred nature.

Now let us turn to paragraph 629. It's a very long paragraph, but I think we should read it.

Mr. Reinken: "We have seen that the generation of commonwealths began in the age of the gods, in which governments were theocratic, that is, divine—"

LS: You see the ambiguity: in what sense they were divine. They believed in gods [who] were regarded as the rulers, although in fact it was a human government. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Later they developed into the first human, that is the heroic, governments, here called human to distinguish them from the divine."

LS: In other words, they are not truly human according to the final terminology. You see, we have to watch all the time. According to the final terminology they are, of course, not human because [they are] not based on the insight of the equality of all men. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Within these human governments, even as the mighty current of a kingly river retains far out to sea the momentum of its flow and the sweetness of its waters, the age of the gods continued to run its course, for that religious way of thinking must still have persisted by which whatever men themselves did was attributed to the agency of the gods." (629)

LS: Let us stop here for the moment. This simile, by the way, occurs literally also at the beginning of paragraph 412. Why that is so I do not know. So the "religious way of thinking"—a very modern way of expression. "The religious way of thinking lasted *still*." It lasted still. Question: Will it last forever? Surely this religious way of thinking[23] affects Vico's way of[24] [presenting] things. What does the religious way of thinking assert? That the gods have made everything. But[25] what would follow from this premise according to a well-known principle of Vico? If the gods have made everything?

Mr. Reinken: Only the gods could understand.

LS: Pardon? Yes, or positively stated?

Mr. Reinken: The new science would not be possible.

LS: Yes, no knowledge is possible because we can only know what we have made. If the gods have made everything, we cannot understand anything. But men have made commonwealths, as he also asserts. Therefore, the new science is possible in contradistinction to natural science, which officially is not possible. But the religious way of thinking ascribes the making of commonwealths to the gods. Yes? Now Vico himself does this by tracing it to providence. I think here we see [what he is doing] quite well[26]. Yes. Now, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus in the state of the families they made Jove—"

LS: This we do not need. The next sentence after that.

Mr. Reinken: "Herein is divine providence to be supremely admired, for, when men's intentions were quite otherwise, it brought them in the first place to the fear of divinity, the cult of which—" (629)

LS: Ya, that we know already. You see, that is a reminder in the context of the old story, private vice leading to public benefit is the proof of the invisible hand. And somewhat later, after the middle of this paragraph, when he speaks—that was the passage discussed last time by Mr. Weiss about the political science. If I remember well, that's the first reference to political science which occurred. And you made quite a comment on that.

Mr. Weiss: Yes.

LS: Read this passage as it stands.

Mr. Reinken: "This form consists entirely, as writers of political theory—"

LS: No, no. "Hence there arises a matter of political science, which is nothing except the science of commanding and obeying the cities." Yes. Mr. Weiss made a comment on it which I do not remember in all [of its] details, but it was based on the disregard of one very simple thing. Because this meaning of political science, you can say, was the original meaning. Where the term *politikē epistēmē*, political science, occurs in Plato in some of the dialogues, it has no other meaning but the science, the *knowledge* of governing societies; and this knowledge of course includes also the knowledge of how to make people obey, and therefore derivatively also the knowledge of obeying. There is no difficulty in this terminology. The conclusions which you have drawn from it would need more substantiation[27] [in order to be] accepted. Now one can say this: since Vico was not particularly interested in this antiquarian question, what political science meant originally, and since this new science is somehow overlapping with what [was] traditionally called—not initially, but traditionally called political science—maybe you are right that by these words he asserts that political science in the traditional sense has to be replaced by the new science. I believe that is what you said.

Mr. Weiss: Well, he said it was nothing other than . . . and it just seemed pretty strong to say that, and I was thinking . . . .

LS: Oh, I see this point. Oh, I see! I didn't connect—sure, this is completely right. In other words, Vico, you can say, restates the crudest notion existing at the beginning, not the much more elevated notion which Aristotle presents in the beginning of the—that is quite correct, yes. But one can of course say that he replaces political science in the traditional sense, including the Hobbean sense, as you rightly pointed out, by the new science, which is not a political science. Why is [it] not a political science proper?

Mr. **Weiss**: Because it is . . . .

LS: It's—?

Mr. **Weiss**: Investigating.

LS: Yes. More simply, it is not normative. The political science, including Hobbes' and of course Machiavelli's, is normative. It shows how one should act politically and how one should govern. And here he only says how people did in fact govern in the various dispensations. That is true, but of course this does not entirely—that is absolutely defensible, but there is only one corollary to add. If you know what belongs to each of these stages, say, to the human stage in contradistinction to the heroic stage, then you can of course criticize any relics of the earlier stages not belonging to it. Do you see that?

Mr. Weiss: Yes.

LS: And therefore, I mean, a merely descriptive science is in fact not possible, because this descriptive science (or behavioral science) is always addressed to political beings[28] who necessarily draw conclusions from it. Think of any practical statement . . . racial discrimination, and slums and so—they're all practical statements, but they hit people who have interests and who . . . by these mere facts. Therefore, I mean[29] [it] is simply either a swindle or naiveté to believe that there can be mere factual findings without political consequences. And to that extent, of course Vico . . . . But still, the core of his teaching is indeed a non-normative one, a descriptive one.

Later on, at the end of the paragraph he speaks of Polyphemus and Ulysses, "in which giant recognized."

Mr. Reinken: "(and in this giant Plato recognizes the fathers of the families in the so-called state of nature preceding the civil state)." (629)

LS: You see, "so-called": that refers to the fact that the term "state of nature" was not such a matter of course when Vico wrote this as it has become since, especially in the textbooks where people don't hesitate to, say, speak of Epicurus' teaching of the state of nature—and you can read Epicurus and he never mentions the term, of course. And to mention another case, some individual—I'm sorry some writer . . . (although I think individual is a perfectly legitimate term, but today it has this connotation) who attacked my interpretation of Locke on the ground that it is all in Hooker and the state of nature. And he even refers to a paragraph in Hooker, so it was of course easy to find. I had read it before, but I looked it up, and of course Hooker never speaks of the state of nature: that was an innovation in political theology, state of nature. And of course Vico is aware of it, and so he says "the state which they call the state of nature." In this terminology, these are all states of nature for him, these are all states of nature because each of these stages has been generated by natural necessity.

Now please read the end of this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Providence therefore, by the aforesaid aristocratic *form* of their governments, led them to unite themselves to their fatherlands in order to preserve such great private interests as their family monarchies were (for this was what they were entirely bent upon)—"

LS: Yes, absolutely. I mean that was the concern, the defense of their private interests. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and thus, beyond any design of theirs, they were brought together in a universal civil good called commonwealth." (629)

LS: Ya, but this common good is an outcome of nothing but the private good . . . . We have heard this very often; we find here only a confirmation of that.

Now then we turn to the next paragraph. We cannot read this whole; beginning roughly where he speaks of Epicurus and Zeno in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "among those very men who are said by Epicurus to have been born of chance and by Zeno to have been creatures of necessity."

LS: Zeno means Stoicism. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Yet chance did not divert them nor fate force them out of this natural order. For at the point when the commonwealths, were to spring forth, the matter was all prepared and ready to receive the form, and there came forth the formation of the commonwealths, composed of mind and body. The prepared materials were—"

LS: "The prepared *matters*," that is matters; to keep the terminology. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> their own languages, their own lands, their own nuptials, their own names (clans or houses), their own arms, and hence their own commands, their own magistrates, and finally their own laws. And because these things were their own they were completely free and therefore constituted a true commonwealth. And all this came about because all the aforesaid institutions had previously belonged to the family fathers as monarchs in the state of nature. The fathers at this juncture, by uniting themselves in an order, came to produce the civil sovereign power, just as in the state of nature they had held the family powers, subject to no one under God. This sovereign civil person was formed of mind and body. The mind was an order of wise men, with such wisdom as could naturally exist in that time of extreme crudeness and simplicity. (630)

LS: You see how careful you have to be: he speaks of the wisdom of the patricians. Of course they were wise, sure, but . . . wisdom. Now[30] one would here expect the following thought: the matter of commonwealths is the private, what he calls here the proper. We have seen proper lands, proper religions, proper languages repeated seven or eight times. The matter of commonwealths is the peculiar, the private. The form should be the common which providence brings out of the private or adds to the private things. But instead he says the form is brought out by the very simple human wisdom of the fathers. So here we have a perfectly non-theological presentation. You need matter and form . . . . The matter was there: these families, each with its own rights, et cetera; and then the form is brought out by that kind of wisdom available at the time. This is perfectly sufficient for understanding the first civil society. In the next paragraph we find also some very interesting remarks about the state of nature—of the natural rights. We should also read that.

Mr. Reinken: "Here is an even greater cause for marveling. By bringing about the birth of the families (all of them born with some awareness of a divinity although, because of their ignorance and disorder, none knew the true one), since each family had its own religion, language, lands, nuptials, name, arms, government and laws, providence had at the same time brought into being the natural right of the larger nations, with all the aforesaid —"

LS: Ya, then . . . . Then he speaks again of the natural right of the major gentes or families. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "providence caused the natural right of the greater gentes (or families), which had been formerly observed in the state of nature, to be transformed into the natural right of the lesser gentes (or peoples), to be observed in the cities. For the family fathers, to whom all the aforesaid prerogatives belonged over the exclusion of their clients, at the time when they banded themselves together in a natural order against the latter—" (631)

LS: And let us stop here. You see again the variety, the various kinds or various stages of natural right. Each stage is natural, as natural as the other. The order of aristocracy is as natural as the state of nature. I mean, we have heard this often but we cannot emphasize it too much.

In the next paragraph he suggests that the natural right of the gentes, of the nations, is practically identical with the civil, sovereign power which includes not only government and its powers, but also land and religion. We can bring this into harmony with what was said before by saying the rights of sovereignty, as understood [by him] in a fundamentally Hobbean way[31], is the natural public law. But this natural public law will of course not be in existence before there are[32] civil societies; but once there is a civil society it has these powers naturally. It is a natural public doctrine. That is all included in natural right. One could even perhaps say that Vico's doctrine of natural right is fundamentally a doctrine of natural public right; at least the emphasis is much more on that than on private right.

In paragraph 633 it appears that the natural right of the gentiles is also known as divine right. Let us read that, paragraph 633.

Mr. Reinken: "What we have here set forth, added to what we have mentioned above of the heroes of the first cities calling themselves gods, will explain the meaning of the phrase *iura a diis posita*, 'laws laid down by the gods,' applied to the dictates of the natural right of nations. But when the natural right of human nations ensued, on which we have cited Ulpian several times—"

LS: Ya, one could even say, "of humane nations," and make it quite clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "on which we have cited Ulpian several times above, and upon which the philosophers and moral theologians based their understanding of the natural right of fully unfolded eternal reason, the phrase was fitly reinterpreted to mean that the natural right of nations was ordained by the true God." (633)

LS: Ya. But of course here he translates "nations"; he should also translate "gentiles." I mean, either *gentes* means gentiles and it should always mean that without explanation—and of course in the latter case, it means naturally all nations; that shows the ambiguity. The philosophers and moral theologians deal only with the natural right of the humane nations. Yes, that's clear. But the other rights, the preceding ones of the heroic age, for example, [are] as natural as that. The question of course would be: To what extent does the natural right of the humane nations include the natural right of the earlier ages, especially in the case of religion?

Now let us now go to paragraph 636, the ancient teaching regarding robbery and piracy, which according to the heroic point of view were not criminal: proofs from Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides. Will you read the end of the paragraph? Of paragraph—

Mr. Reinken: "What is more remarkable is that the highly civilized Greeks, in the times of their most cultivated humanity, should have practiced such a barbarous custom, which indeed provided them with almost all the subjects of their comedies. It is perhaps because of this custom, still practiced by the inhabitants against the Christians, that the coast of Africa facing us is called the Barbary." (636)

LS: Ya. Well, now Algiers and other places. Yes, but the question is this: Since the republic is now the Christian republic, that is *respublica Christiana*, one has to consider what is regarded [as] right[33] between Christians and non-Christians in contradistinction[34] [to that] between, say, Italians and French. In other words, is this not in fact the right now and does—what is the position regarding robbery and piracy on the part of Christian governments over against non-Christian governments? Or you don't have to go so far: between Protestants and Catholics? Think of Drake, the famous Drake:[35] When he made his heretical acts against the Spanish fleet, was this regarded as criminal? No. No. So you see, therefore some of these heroic things still survived. The beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "The principle of this oldest law of war was the inhospitality of the heroic peoples which we have discussed above." (637)

LS: Ya,[36] you remember this discussion; we came across it. Consider especially paragraph 396, where he spoke of the inhospitality of the Jews in particular. Yes? Now given this inhospitality of the Jews, it must reflect[37] [institutions that are] similar[38] to[39] [those] of the inhospitable early gentile nations; that is, I think, clear. Paragraph 639.

Mr. Reinken: "Now the heroic custom of holding strangers to be eternal enemies, which was observed by each people privately in peace, when extended abroad, took the form recognized as common to all the heroic nations of carrying on eternal wars with each other, with continual looting and raiding. Thus from the cities, which Plato tells us were born on the basis of arms—" (639)

LS: And so we can leave that. So—and let us now turn to paragraph 644.

Mr. Reinken: "Only by understanding this nature of human civil affairs and in no other way can we solve—" (644)

LS: No, I mean the point—we can restate it in simple words. The early nations were collective Cyclopes, collective polyphemes, I mean, as "quote almost as cannibalistic as . . ." as we have heard before. Yes, but in paragraph 645 he refers to Thucydides' remark about this early time, and calls him the most acute, the most acute and most sapient writer. I believe that no one has been given such an epithet before, surely not Moses. [Laughter] Ya? Good. This shows very well what he is I think driving at.

Now let us turn to paragraph 655, or rather—where he interprets some myths, for example, about Penelope. Let us at read the end of paragraph 654 where Penelope prostituted herself to the . . . . how do you call it? Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question. The fact that he doesn't give any great praises, any superlative adjectives to Moses since Moses had a different title through—

LS: Ya, sure; we know that. And therefore it is possible to give a perfectly innocent explanation of the fact that he quotes quite a few other writers' sayings as "golden" sayings and [only two] of Moses, because it is in a way impudent to praise the holy writers. Yes? That can be defended. Yes, but why does he call in two passages, nevertheless, Moses' sayings "golden?"[40] I mean, if [41] [it] is an act of impudence to call any passage of the Bible golden because man [thus] makes of himself, as it were, the arbiter of holy writ, that is a very good point. But the two exceptions show that this is not so simple. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Can you carry that over also to any praise or non-praise of Moses?

LS: Yes, I mean once—yes, via this step. Via this step.[42] He has praised Moses, after all, [for] some sayings—although regarding irrelevant material, irrelevant from the point of view of the Bible: what Moses says about the Adamites and the Egyptians. But these are not the only reasons. We have also to consider[43] the facts to which Mr. . . . referred again—the chronological problems, you know, biblical chronology, and history, and all this kind of thing. Yes, Mr. . . .

Student: . . . than Varro who he praises consistently and at one point calls "the wisest man in the age of Cicero."

LS: Yes; I see. Well, yes, Varro was of course invaluable to him as an antiquarian, but he could not possibly regard him as a man of the best judgment, of an outstanding judgment; and it makes absolute sense that he selects Thucydides for this highest position. I mean, that is somehow the modern tradition,[44] towards the end of this modern age, one could almost say—Nietzsche towards the end of his life, in a very long passage. Plato, Thucydides: that's the peak. That belongs to that modern tradition. Not as men ought to be . . . but the analyst of men as they are. Yes. Now the end of paragraph 654.

Mr. Reinken: "In other versions Penelope prostitutes herself to the suitors (signifying the extension of *connubium* to the plebs) and gives birth to Pan, a monster of two discordant natures, human and bestial."

LS: In other words, this union of the plebian and the patrician from a patrician point of view is monstrous. Naturally. Even today quite a few people regard mixed alliances as monstrous.

Mr. Reinken: "This is precisely the creature at war with itself of Livy, for the Roman patricians told the plebeians that, if they were to share with them the *connubium* of the nobles, the resulting offspring would be like Pan, a monster of two discordant natures brought forth by Penelope who had prostituted herself to the Plebeians." (654)

LS: Yes. Next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From Pasiphaë, who has lain with a bull, is born the minotaur, a monster of two diverse natures. This story must mean that the Cretans extended *connubium* to foreigners, who must have come to—" (655)

LS: We can leave it at that; this has very great implications which cannot possibly be brought out without considering another passage. In paragraph 657, when he comes to the royal arms of France in the second part of the paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Just that—"

LS: "The royal arms of France—"

Mr. Reinken: "Hence the royal arms of France (in signification of the Salic law which excludes women from inheriting that kingdom) are supported by two angels clothed in dalmatics and armed with spears, and are adorned with the heroic motto: 'The lilies do not spin.'" (657)

LS: Ya.[45] What he has immediately in mind is simply the lower status of women in the heroic age. But what is . . . suspect? I mean I simply do not know enough of the affairs . . . lilies, whether they do have the circumscription "lilies spin"; "lilies do not spin." I simply do not know. I have never heard it before, and I have no easy way of finding out about French heraldry. So if someone knows anything about it, it would be very helpful for us. But however this may be, he calls this word a "heroic word." Now you know of course where this word comes from, the New Testament.

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, sure. Here it is[46] explicitly used only in reference to[47] [this] alleged or real subscription of the French arms of the royal house. But if we take it [as being] of the New Testament, where it comes from, then the New Testament would itself be a document of heroic morality. Now this[48] is very interesting and I must say that I have not found any evidence for that here, if this is evidence at all. But I know this from Machiavelli, an author whom Vico knew very well indeed. Now this one can say is a major theme in Machiavelli's *Discourses* as a whole, if not the most important theme:[49] to give an account, in terms of his political wisdom, of the Bible. I have written a whole book about it, and so I cannot—very briefly, Livy takes the place of the Bible. Livy is his Bible. And he, Livy, has two functions. First, as a kind of counter-Bible, of course. His authority. And on the other hand,[50] just as he demolishes the authority of Livy in the book,[51] a demolition of the authority of the Bible [preceded the whole work of Machiavelli]. And what he does to Livy, to the demolition of Livy's authority, has its counterpart in an unwritten demolition of biblical authority, or [one] written in the *Discourses* with invisible ink.

Now there are quite a few specimens of that. For example . . . there are two kinds of captains and, as you know, vice is presented in Christian theology as a captain. I do not know how long this goes back, but it was common in Machiavelli's age, as I happen to know from Savonarola. I do not know how long this goes back. Now there are two types of captain. One is like

Manlius . . . that man who commands the . . . particularly severe.[vii] And this man is described by Livy (and Machiavelli takes over this description) as having one defect: he was of heavy tongue, just as Moses according to the Bible, [and] he had therefore Aaron as his speaker.

And then there is another kind of captain, who is young and gentle. Valerius Corvinus is one of them and this corresponds, I think, to . . . .[52] He uses, in other words, with an incredible cleverness, all kinds of things in Livy which have of course nothing to do with the question of Judaism and Christianity . . . . And there is one passage which is particularly interesting: Manlius Capitolinus, one of the patricians who fought for the plebs and was[53] thrown down the Tarpeian Rock [by the patricians]. [54]That is really unbelievable. When Livy speaks of that, [of] what happened to Manlius Capitolinus (who was of course revered by the plebs who he tried to help), Livy used the expression *sanguis salvatoris*: the blood of the savior, *homo sanguis salvatoris*. It's very, very clever. In brief, I believe that is a part of Vico's background.[55] And later on, through Marxism, these things became of course[56] very popular—the plebian revolt against the rule of priests in the Jewish community connected with Jesus.

And at any rate, for[57] Vico this must be a great question, for the following reason. You get the Middle Ages, and the Middle Ages is, as you know, based on a new barbarism, of the Northern Germanic tribes.[58] Just as you have a feudalism in early Rome, you have another feudalism in the Middle Ages. But in the Middle Ages, the situation is of course very different because there is also a carry-over from other civilizations and especially Christianity, which was not of Northern origin. And this is for him a very great problem. Now I believe [that in] this passage which we have read before, in paragraph 159 when he speaks of the situation in the Middle Ages, you have, on the one hand,[59] heroic things [just] like [in] Homer—you know, with the romances of the Middle Ages, the praise of heroes and all this kind of thing, and the story of Charlemagne and King Arthur or whatever you might think. And at the same time [you have] the most sophisticated scholasticism which doesn't fit into that heroic character of the Middle Ages at all. These are, I think, elements of what Vico truly thought about the Medieval period, a period which of course is still continued to some extent up to his own time.

Now I believe that there are also references to this question in the following paragraphs. Let us see—let us perhaps read paragraph 658.

Mr. Reinken:

> Finally Hercules breaks into a fury on being stained by the blood of the centaur Nessus—the same plebeian monster of two discordant natures mentioned by Livy—that is, in the midst of civil fury he extends *connubium* to the plebs and is contaminated by plebeian blood and so dies, even as the god Fidius, the Roman Hercules, dies with the Petelian law called *De nexu*. By this law "the bond of faith was broken," although Livy connects it with an event occurring a decade later but similar in substance to the event which had given occasion to the Petelian law, an event in which it was necessary that the matter of the aforesaid phrase should be put into execution and not simply decreed. Livy must have found the phrase in

[vii] After his son proudly reported that he had defeated an enemy soldier in single combat, Manlius Torquatus had him executed on the grounds that the combat had not been authorized.

> some ancient chronicler whom he follows with as much good faith as ignorance— (658)

LS: I believe it [all] has[60] more than one meaning, because—Let us finish this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> For when the plebeian debtors were freed from private incarceration by their noble creditors, debtors were still constrained by judicial decisions to pay their debts, but they were released from the feudal law, the law of the Herculean knot, which had had its origin in the first asylums of the world, the bond by which Romulus had founded Rome in his asylum. It seems very likely, therefore, that the chronicler had written *vinculum Fidii*, the bond of the god Fidius, whom Varro asserts to have been the Roman Hercules, and that later historians, not understanding the phrase, erroneously read the word as *fidei*. The same heroic natural right is found among the American Indians, and in our world it still obtains among the Abyssinians of Africa and the Muscovites and Tartars of Europe and Asia. It was practiced with greater mildness by the Hebrews, among whom debtors served only seven years. (658)

LS: I think that is fairly clear: he gives, of course, a sop. The Hebrews did it with a greater mildness, but they did the same. Now if there is a heroic period with the Hebrews, then everything else follows. I think this whole paragraph makes a . . . impression as being an indication of how he would read the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Very late composition. Moses is much later than the composer of Job, the writer of the book of Job, as we have seen on an earlier occasion. But [this contains] very old data no longer understood by the compiler of the book.[61] And in paragraph 660 he makes clear that the heroic contests, i.e. between patricians and plebeians, were of course also in Phoenicia, Egypt, and Phrygia.

What about the Jews in Egypt? Was this not a kind of Egyptian plebs who rebelled against the Egyptian rulers; and must it not be understood in the same way? These are, of course, only suggestions, and to make this [into a] true argument we would have to know much more than we do at present.

In paragraph 663, the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Taking the word people in the sense of recent times and applying it to the earliest times of the world of the cities (because of the inability of philosophers and philologians alike to imagine such severe aristocracies) has led to misunderstandings—" (663)

LS: Yes, you see Vico makes clear what he claims to be his crucial innovation. Hitherto no one had any understanding of the early aristocracies, neither the philosophers nor the philologians. But of course there is a question: he refers himself to what Plato said in the Third Book of the *Laws* about Polyphemus as the first stage, and how out of these early societies the first cities grew. But surely it is not developed by Plato on the basis of such axioms as he poses at the beginning.

And to repeat this again: What is the difference? For Plato it is clear that men were always reasoning beings—perhaps on the basis of very poor data, and perhaps reasoning badly, but it was always reasoning—whereas Vico in fact says that there was a stage when men had only sense, imagination and passion, and no reason, no universals. For Plato there can never have been mute human beings; that's impossible. For Vico there were such mute human beings. That is a fundamental difference—and of course also from Aristotle.

Now in paragraph 665 the traditional view of Rome presupposes that the Romans—this was the paragraph [that was] very important for Mr. . . . and I think quite rightly. Now I [will] try to read my interpretation and you correct me, Mr. . . . . The traditional view of Rome presupposes that the Romans had a privilege from god, i.e. were the elect nation. For even the Greeks—people of outstanding intelligence and humanity—had no knowledge of their antiquity; hence, how could the Romans have had it except on the basis of such a special privilege? Now the fact that the Jews have perfect knowledge of their antiquity (in fact, of the creation of the world) is a special act of divine grace, and this is perfectly compatible with the possibility that they were a barbarous and rude nation far inferior to the Greeks. You know the Romans had such a perfect knowledge of their past although they were such a rude and barbarous nation. The application to the Jews is obvious. He argues on the basis of[62] the assumption, which he regards as absurd, that the Romans did have perfect knowledge of their antiquity. But this is impossible.

Now you made quite a few more remarks about this paragraph. Can you restate the more important ones which I omitted?

[end of tape]

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[1] Deleted "But."
[2] Deleted "I didn't make."
[3] Deleted "it."
[4] Deleted "take."
[5] Deleted "took some—."
[6] Deleted "is."
[7] Deleted "here."
[8] Deleted "talking."
[9] Deleted "Now only—."
[10] Deleted "And then—."
[11] Deleted "This—."
[12] Deleted "I think we have to return—."
[13] Deleted "of."
[14] Deleted "It must be careful—."
[15] Deleted "This."
[16] Deleted "tradition spoke in— I mean the."
[17] Deleted "offspring."
[18] Deleted "a discussion of Thomas Aquinas."
[19] Deleted "But the highest—."
[20] Deleted "that."
[21] Deleted "the—he talks about this, in a way— that."
[22] Deleted "to say—."
[23] Deleted "surely."
[24] Deleted "presentation of."
[25] Deleted "what follows—."
[26] Deleted "into" and moved "what he is doing."

[27] Deleted “for being.”
[28] Deleted “and.”
[29] Deleted “this.”
[30] Deleted “here—.”
[31] Moved “by him.”
[32] Deleted “not.”
[33] Moved “as.”
[34] Deleted “as.”
[35] Deleted “Was he—.”
[36] Deleted “let us—.”
[37] Deleted “to.”
[38] Moved “institutions.”
[39] Deleted “that.”
[40] Deleted “Then he should—.”
[41] Deleted “this.”
[42] Deleted “After.”
[43] Deleted “also.”
[44] Deleted “when in.”
[45] Deleted “now this is of course—.”
[46] Deleted “used.”
[47] Deleted “these.”
[48] Deleted “—This.”
[49] Changed from: “Now in Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, as a whole, this one can say is a major theme of the *Discourses*, if not the most important theme.”
[50] Deleted “it is also—.”
[51] Deleted “there” and moved “preceded the whole work of Machiavelli.”
[52] Deleted “And this goes—This kind of thing—.”
[53] Moved “by the patricians.”
[54] Deleted “and then.”
[55] Deleted “In other words—.”
[56] Deleted “these things became.”
[57] Deleted “Machiavelli—For Machiavelli—For.”
[58] Deleted “Exactly, you know—.”
[59] Moved “just.”
[60] Moved “all.”
[61] Deleted “This—.”
[62] Deleted “the premise that—.”

Session 13: November 10, 1963

Leo Strauss: This was a very fine paper.[1] I think this is the first paper that you ever read for me.[i] Now you mentioned quite a number of the important points and I will limit myself only to those which form a unity. What you stated at the beginning about the way you wrote your paper was very sensible; that's the only way to proceed, if one doesn't see one's way, at least to see as much as one can see.

Now, you spoke of Vico's treatment of myth. And how was myth treated prior to Vico according to Vico himself? You mentioned one thing, namely, the simple rejection of myth as nonsense, which[2] he rejects. But this is the least interesting. There was another one which he also rejects, and you refer to that. What was the other treatment of myth which he also rejects?

Student: Well, the religious—

LS: Well, as containing profound, philosophic wisdom. Yes. That he also rejects. And this is, in a way, much more important for him than those who merely reject myth as nonsense. What then does he do with myth if he is dissatisfied with the previous treatment of myth?

Student: I think that he is in a way trying to restore the credibility of myth by giving it a different interpretation.

LS: Yes, what kind of an interpretation? I mean, why is myth so important to him? After all, he does not believe in all this.

Student: Because it gives information . . . information of the early . . . .

LS: And so in other words, the myths are important not as literally true, nor as containing philosophic wisdom, but as documents of early human thought. Why is he so interested in early human thought or heroic thought, as he calls it?

Student: He wants to understand the origin and [how][3] civilization has emerged so that he can . . . .

LS:[4] Since he is a philosopher, why this particularly powerful concern with the early stages in which men were unable to philosophize? The bulk of the work is devoted to the early, early men.

Student: . . . .

LS: What was[5] the most obvious alternative in his time for a political philosophy? He uses the term all the time: natural right. Why does the problem of natural right lead to his inquiry? Is there anyone—I mean, I hope there is at least someone in the class who can answer that question which we have discussed[6] more than once.

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, but still we are not yet at institu—yes.

Different Student: When we come to natural right, we see there wasn't one natural right. There are many natural rights.

LS: Ya. In other words, the whole approach to natural right is wrong because there are *n* natural rights, and the proof of that is supplied by the *New Science*.

Now—and his study of myth, of early human thought, is underlying especially his search for the true Homer. You pointed out the fact that this section on the true Homer either doesn't exist or plays a very insignificant role in the earlier presentations of Vico's doctrine. Here it plays a considerable role. How can one state this more neatly, that it plays a considerable role?

Student:[ii] If Homer does present—

LS: No. I mean first that this quest for the true Homer is a very important part of the final version of Vico's doctrine. A quite external fact, at first glance.[7]

Student: . . . .

LS: No. Well, something very superficial, but also more striking.

Student: . . . .

LS: That is very good. Ya, I did not even think of it. But because this frontispiece is a very enigmatic thing also. But something very obvious: the book consists of five Books. The third, i.e. the center Book, is devoted to Homer. I mean, if this position is of some importance for Vico's way of writing, which I believe—but it's not yet sufficiently settled. So it is really externally the center part of Vico's teaching.

Now what is Vico's discovery regarding Homer? You mentioned that. Homer is not an individual, a poet, but the true Homer is the folk mind. Yes, that one can say, and that was indeed an epoch-making thing. And the whole nineteenth century and to some extent even the twentieth century is still affected by that. The folk mind. Romanticism—primarily German romanticism, but also some other is expressed by this notion of the folk mind.

But still, is Vico a Romantic? I mean, in this sense: that he prefers the folk—[8]the folk sentiment, one could almost say—to thinking, to rational thought. Can one say that? I think that you gave an answer to your question yourself, but let us make it quite clear.

Student: I'm not sure that . . . forcibly on one side. Because in the first part of the last section he indicated that there were two Homers.

[ii] Author of the paper.

LS: Yes, but this would not affect that, you see; I mean, I do not know exactly what . . . would say today. When I studied,[9] there were bold men who said the *Iliad* was written by one man and the *Odyssey* by another. You know, I think at that time only Scott, an American scholar, J. V. Scott . . . dared to say there was one poet Homer who composed both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,[iii] which was the traditional view, more or less. And the ordinary view was [that] these were parts written by different poets at very different times, and then it was put together in the age of . . . . So yes, probably the compiler was a rather mediocre fellow; therefore [there were] the many stupidities in the whole thing. And Scott answered very simply and rhetorically powerfully. He said: Who is a better judge of a good epic poem . . . or other famous classical scholars, or Milton, Goethe, Vergil? And the answer is implied in the question. But still, this great change in Homeric criticism—and this is, by the way, one of Vico's titles to fame in the ordinary historiography, that he was the one who put Homer[ic] criticism, and therewith fundamentally the understanding [of] all earlier poetry and therewith by implication of all poetry, on an entirely new basis by the discovery of the folk mind. But I repeat my question:[10] Does Vico come down on the side of those who prefer the sentiment of the people to the thought of the few?

Student: This is where I didn't think he came down solidly on . . . .

LS: Well. Mr. . . . .

Student: In terms of his own theory he doesn't seem to. He speaks of poetry as the sense of mankind and philosophy as the intellect—

LS: Ya, but—

Student: And by following sense . . . . better, so—

LS: Ya, this could be accepted. You can very well have the same distinction between sense and intellect, and say [that] sense is much better than this pale derivative intellect. Many people have said this in our age and in the nineteenth century.

Student . . . .

LS: No. Yes, I think that one can even prove it. In other words, Vico discovers, so to speak, the Romantic possibility, but he does not share it. He comes down on the side of the intellect very clearly, I think.

Now in this connection you mentioned his occasional statement that the poets are few in number, like the philosophers. And how can this jibe with the notion of a poetic world, a poetic nation? Apparently there is a difficulty even here. Well, I think the difficulty is simply this: when he speaks of the theological poets, the earliest poets, then he means indeed, indefinitely men. But Homer is not a theological poet. He's heir to the theological poets. We will come to that later.

[iii] Strauss refers to J. A. Scott, author of *The Unity of Homer* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1921).

And the last point I would like to make right away is this: you referred to his reference to Christ. That was the first reference in the whole work, and there is only one other, which we will come across next time. And just as we have two references to Christ—explicit references—[11] we [also] have two references to the golden sayings of Moses. So for a man who claims to be a strict Catholic, his non-use of the Bible is very remarkable. That is surely true.

Now there was a case, a much more important case, of this kind of Homeric problems which had been discussed before Vico started his work, and that is Moses. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: You'll have to speak a bit louder.

Student: . . . and that was a parallel between . . . Vico's criticism of Homer and modern criticism of scripture, and—

LS: Namely?

Student: —where he comes . . . and parallel to the concept of two Isaiahs.

LS: Yes,[12] [the] two Isaiahs [is] a later thing, but Moses is the most important thing. And if—I mean, Spinoza had claimed to have proof that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch on the basis of philological evidence. And who[13] wrote the Pentateuch, according to Moses[iv]? Ezra. That's very late: fifth century. So you have a similar problem here, you know. The Moses in the sense of the author of the Pentateuch is not the Moses spoken about in the Pentateuch. You know, there is a great parallel. And even Croce in his work on Vico refers to the fact that Spinoza's criticism of the Old Testament must have played a considerable role for Vico. But he thinks that Vico was affected by it only, as it were, only methodically but not substantively regarding the Old Testament itself which I, for one, cannot believe. And there is much more, I believe, regarding the biblical question in Vico's discussion of Homer than what we'd think. Not that Homer was unimportant for him, but the Bible was of course much more important because, after all, no claims about the guidance of human life were raised on behalf of Homer. Homer was not in this sense an authority. Good.

Now we have a backlog from last time, which is—and we will try our best. Now we read last time paragraph 688, and we should now read paragraph 689. And I remind you only of what we read in paragraph 688. The poetic theologians—that's to say, the early, early human beings who can be said to be human beings (you know, I mean the Cyclopes were the poetic theologians)—had the same theme as Vico: the human world. But they lacked physics, hence they did not understand the world of nations which they, in a way, created. Now let us turn to paragraph 689.

Mr. Reinken: "At length the sky broke forth in thunder—"

LS: 689—yes.

[iv] Strauss probably meant to say Spinoza.

Mr. Reinken: "and Jove thus gave a beginning to the world of men by arousing in them the impulse which is proper to the liberty of the mind, just as from motion, which is proper to bodies as necessary agents, he began the world of nature. For what seems to be impulse in bodies is but insensible motion, as we said above in the Method—" (689)

LS: Now let us stop here. Now again, Mr. Rotella, do you have the text?

Mr. Rotella: Yes.

LS: Now what is the subject of *cominciò*? Jove or *il monde della natura*?[v]

Mr. Rotella: No, I think it could be an independent sentence, the same as . . . .

LS: And how would you translate *siccome dal moto*?

Mr. Rotella: "The world of nature begun."

LS: Ya, that is how I understood it. That is, at least, ambiguous—

Mr. Rotella: Yes.

LS: Who began the motion[14]? Jove or the world of nature? Or rather, motion or Jove?

Yes, now this statement about liberty of the mind in contradistinction to necessary agents we have already discussed before. How can there be freedom of the mind in the stage where man is an absolute plaything of imagination and passion, and does not have reason? We have discussed this before.

Let us turn now to the beginning of paragraph 692. Yes?

Student: What is . . . . Is this impulse wonder or fear?

LS: *Conatus*, *conatus*—the incipient motion, but which he tries to limit to the mind. He says the *conatus*, which is peculiar to the freedom of the mind or proper to the freedom of the mind. We had parallels to that before, you know, this distinction. Yes.

Mr. Butterworth: Isn't it that the word *moto* . . . . Then what made, what gave impulse to motion? Because many times he uses this, the *da* something, such and such—

LS: Yes, now how would you render his thought in the form of a sentence, with subject and predicate?

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[v] The Bergin and Fisch translation takes Jove as the cause of two actions, the beginning of the world of men and the beginning of the world of nature. Strauss secures Mr. Rotella's agreement that the second clause could indicate that the world of nature began from motion, not Jove. He takes *cominciò* as intransitive with "the world of nature" as its subject.

Mr. Butterworth: Just as by motion, which is—

LS: And so on—

Student: . . . .

LS: The world of nature began from motion. Period.

Mr. Butterworth: Well, yes.

LS: Period. That is exactly what I mean. But one doesn't know[15] if Jupiter or Jove is involved in that as he is involved in the creation of the world of men.

Mr. Butterworth: But one doesn't know because you don't know where *moto* began.

LS: Yes, but this is—we had a similar ambiguity—

Student: And another thing: the lightning is also independent of Jupiter.

LS: What?

Student: *Finalmente fulminò il cielo*—

LS: Yes. That is true, yes; to say nothing of the fact that in the most orthodox construction of the sentence he would replace God by Jove. Yes, the most orthodox, also [16]something strange. Sure. Now the beginning of paragraph 692.

Mr. Reinken: "But the greatest and most important part of physics is the contemplation of the nature of man."

LS: "Of physics," i.e. you cannot have the new science except on the basis of physics. You know, this is a question which we have frequently come across. Now let us read the whole paragraph 692.

Mr. Reinken: "We have set forth above in the Poetic Economy how the founders of gentile humanity in a certain sense generated and produced in themselves the proper human form in its two aspects: that is, how by means of frightful religions and terrible paternal powers and sacred ablutions they brought forth from their giant bodies the form of our just corporature, and how by the discipline of their household economy they brought forth from their bestial minds the form of our human mind." (692)

LS: Yes, you see here the form of our human mind formed out of the bestial minds by humans, by humans. Now that is all we need here.

695: yes, but this has to be read in connection with parts of 694. But let us see. The other part of the soul; the theological poets put it in the air. At the end of this paragraph, "And the poetic poet is just—again, with just sense—

Mr. Reinken: "And the theological poets, again with a just sense, put the course of life in the course of the blood, on whose proper flow our life depends."

LS: Ya, you see these theological poets were of course materialists, or corporealists as we could perhaps say.[17] If you read paragraph 694 you would see that this would only confirm it.

A few more points. At the end of paragraph 701.

Mr. Reinken: "The Titan Prometheus implanted therein the passions of the other animals, taking from each species its ruling passion. In a rough way they understood—"

LS: Where is this? 701.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: I see, yes. I see now. "In a rough way."

Mr. Reinken: "In a rough way they understood that concupiscence is the mother of all the passions, and that the passions have their dwelling in our humors." (701)

LS: Ya. This is of course a somewhat ambiguous sentence, but it might as well suggest a very corporealistic interpretation of the passions as Descartes and Hobbes had given them before that. Good. This much about the physics proper. Now in 703; it is a very strange paragraph. Let us read that as a whole.

Mr. Reinken:

> Now, since the minds of the first men of the gentile world took things one at a time, being in this respect little better than the minds of beasts, for which each new sensation cancels the preceding (which is the cause of their being unable to compare and reason discursively), therefore their sentences must all have been taken as singulars by those who heard them. Hence the sublime sentence admired by Dionysius Longinius in the ode of Sappho, which Catullus later turned into Latin, in which the lover in the presence of his mistress expresses himself by the simile: "Like a god he seems to me," yet falls short of the highest degree of sublimity, because the lover does not make the sentence singular to himself, as Terence does when he says, "We have attained the life of the gods."

LS: In other words, he doesn't say "like." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This sentiment, though proper to him who speaks, still has the air of a common sentiment because of the Latin usage of plural for singular in the first person. However, in

another comedy of the same poet, this sentiment is raised to the highest degree of sublimity by being made singular and appropriated to him who expresses it: 'I am become a god.'" (703)

LS: Ya, I have become a god. Now what does this mean? He refers here to that fact which Aristotle has made famous, that children call all men fathers and all women mothers. In other words, they are unable to—they do not have a concept of man and woman. They know only dad and mom, these almost unarticulate sounds, and they must do for men and women. This is surely part of the argument. But it's not clear. What do these three quotations mean, these three poetic quotations? Does he mean to say that the god is the beloved, whatever the beloved may be? I do not know. I do not understand this paragraph. It is one of the many enigmatic paragraphs in the book.

Student: In referring to the degrees of sublimity and the fact that the ancient theological poets were called sublime, there seems to be some connection between the sublimity and the fact that the poets were the creators and that they were . . . by the gods, in that—

LS: Ya. That goes somehow in the direction in which I am groping. He says later on, and he may have said before that—you know when he calls the first age the age of the gods and this means both they created the gods and that they were the gods. I think it is connected with that. And poetry in a way seems to preserve that. Because Terence of course is not an early poet, a theological poet, he's a late comic poet. Yes?

Student: Well, this reminded me of something I had been curious about. He must have known the theory of . . . .

LS: Will you tell your less learned colleagues what the theory of the . . . is?

Student: That the gods were great heroes among men—

LS: Deified human beings. Well, it is at least known by the name of . . . but I think that it is much older than him. Yes. I think he never mentions him, no. But the reason may be that he was more learned than those who called this . . . and therefore give it a somewhat narrow view. This is true.

Yes, now let us turn to paragraph 708. In the middle of that paragraph he says that "heroism of virtue."

Mr. Reinken: "For that heroism of virtue which realizes its highest idea belongs to philosophy—"

LS: Ya, its best idea; his best idea, the *idea optima*. You remember his distinction between high and—

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "its best idea belongs to philosophy and not to poetry." (708)

LS: Ya, that's all we need. He is not a Romantic in the sense loosely defined before. Yes, but you also must not forget another implication, because the teachers of men up to Vico's time, to put it mildly, were not only the philosophers, but also the Bible. And when he says unqualifiedly here "that heroism of virtue" which is modeled on its best idea, that of the philosophers, then he should at least have said something [about] how this is related to the Bible, which he does not do. And in the sequel he makes clear [that] another kind of heroism, the gallant heroism, belongs to the age of corruption. Now what is this gallant heroism? This is surely Homer, but it is also—as I think the word "gallant" points to—the medieval heroism to which he does not refer here. You know, the knights, medieval knights. This applies also to medieval . . . . Yes.

Student: You're bringing up the Middle Ages. Could we say that there is a parallel between Homer and Dante?

LS: He takes up Dante.

Student: Yes, I read that. Would he consider Dante more or less in the same way[18] as Homer, and see Dante mainly as the expression of a period? But Dante existed; this is, this is—

LS: Ya, sure, but I think that—let us wait until we come to the passage, but I would say offhand Dante cannot be called simply a poet in Vico's sense because he was also a philosopher, as everyone knows and Vico knows.

Student: . . . .

LS: Well, even apart from the familiar, the other writings. I mean the *Monarchia* is not a poetic book, unless you use "poetic" in a very wide sense of the term in which it is not commonly used. Good. 709.

Mr. Reinken: "All that we have remarked in these three corollaries on heroic sentences, descriptions and customs, belongs properly to the discovery of the true Homer which we shall take up in the following book." (709)

LS: Ya, well that is one of the many of these kinds of references where he is so super-clear and at the same [time] of course[19] indicates a strange lack of order that is absolutely unnecessary to this kind of thing. Yes. 715.

Mr. Reinken: "With the practice of burial the idea of the underworld was extended, and the poets called the grave the underworld (an expression also found in Holy Scripture)." (715)

LS: Ya,[20] but here is of course not a specific quote, only a general reference to biblical usage. Now it is true that there is an Old Testament term for this Hades—*sheol*, in Hebrew—which in the Vulgate is translated by *infernum* or *inferni*, so . . . correct. But[21] what is the context here? Poetic cosmography. Heaven, earth, and inferno. This naturally causes us to consider the

question of the biblical cosmography, a question which is not explicitly discussed by Vico but—. One thing I would like to note: when you look at this section on the cosmography, you see here the discussion of hell in paragraph[s] 714 to 721; of heaven, 711 to 713; and of earth, 722. I.e., hell is discussed at infinitely greater length than heaven and earth together. That has to do with questions about the fear of which he had spoken before.

727. We cannot read everything. Read only—okay, read the paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "But as the indefinite force of human minds went on developing, and as the contemplation of the heavens required for taking the auspices obliged the peoples to study the heavens continually, in the minds of the nations the heavens rose ever higher, and with them rose likewise the gods and the heroes."

LS: Isn't this one of the many cases where he speaks of nations, *nazioni*, and not of *genti*. *Genti* could mean, of course, only the gentiles. *Nazioni* does not have such an indication and therefore the question is clear. In other words, is not the same development from heaven, understood as slightly higher than the highest mountain, to the so-called true distances not also noted in the Bible? And so—good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> And here for the ascertainment of poetic astronomy it may help us to make use of three items of philological erudition. The first states that astronomy was bought into the world by the Chaldean people; the second, that the Phoenicians carried from the Chaldeans to the Egyptians the use of the quadrant and the knowledge of the elevation of the pole; and the third, that the Phoenicians, who must have been instructed by the Chaldeans, brought astral theology to the Greeks. (727)

LS: You see, no Jews mentioned. This development of science bypassed the Jews. Of course, Vico can always say Moses knew all these things by divine revelation, but—good. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "To these three bits of philological erudition we may add these two philosophical truths: first, the civil truth that nations if not emancipated in the extreme of religious liberty (which only comes in the final stages of decadence), are naturally wary of accepting foreign deities; and second, the physical truth that, by an ocular illusion, the planets seem to us larger than the fixed stars." (727)

LS: Ya. In other words, an ultimate liberty of religion is possible after all, if only in a state of extreme decadence. Now we turn to paragraph 729.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus, beginning with vulgar astronomy, the first peoples wrote in the skies the history of their gods and their heroes. Thence there remained this eternal property, that the memories of men full of divinity or of heroism are matter worthy of history, in the one case because of works of genius and of esoteric wisdom, in the other because of works of valor and of vulgar wisdom—" (729)

LS: This is all that we need. You see the superiority of theoretical to practical life is here still maintained corresponding to the superiority of secret to vulgar wisdom. Works of the *ingenium*, of the mind, and esoteric wisdom are distinguished from works of virtue and vulgar wisdom. Just as secret wisdom is connected with the intelligence, the vulgar wisdom is connected with virtue.

736. Now here—we cannot read this long paragraph, but you see he refers here again to the impious race of Shem and also to the descendants of Ham and Japheth. Here the question [arises] which we have come across before: How does Vico's chronology jibe with the orthodox chronology? That's a long question. I can only report that Nicolini, who is very conservative in a sense, says that it does not jive. But it would take long work of computation which I, for one, have not been able to do. I remind you only of the question.

737 is extremely interesting for . . . . Only the second half is necessary for our purposes.

Mr. Reinken: "And since these were both inland nations . . . . For, as we shall show later—"

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "For, as we shall show later, monarchy cannot arise save as a result of the unchecked liberty of the peoples, to which the optimates subject their power in the course of civil wars. When this authority is thus divided into minimal parts among the peoples—"

LS: In other words, where each one, each citizen, is only one hundred thousandth or one millionth of the power of the commonwealth. That he means. A democracy. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "the whole of it is easily taken over by those who, coming forward as partisans of popular liberty, emerge finally as monarchs."

LS: So now we know the dirty secret of monarchy. Next sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "Phoenicia, however, as a maritime nation enriched by its commerce, remained in the stage of popular liberty, which is the first form of human government." (737)

LS: Ya, that we know; a commercial nation can remain democratic. A fact will prove available to everybody in Vico's age.

Student: Holland?

LS: Holland, of course. And naturally also the memory of Carthage and so—and Sidon and Tyre. But Holland was the famous case, of course. Yes, very interesting. So in other words, it is possible that a democracy may last; it does not have to be transformed into a monarchy if it is a commercial nation.

And here we see also how complicated[22] his earlier reference to Spinoza's political doctrine [is], that of hucksters' doctrine. Spinoza's doctrine was based on the experience of Holland and expressed this trading nation. So that is quite remarkable. Yes. 739, towards the end.

Mr. Reinken: "Both names signified divination—"?

LS: "To this science there remained the first names—"

Mr. Reinken: "This science preserved the first names that had been given to it in full propriety astronomy, the science of the law of the stars, and astrology, the science of the speech of the stars."

LS: Which are literal translations of the Greek words; whether they are the origins of the terms is of no interest to us. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Both names signified divination, even as from the aforesaid theorems came the term theology for the science of the language of the gods in their oracles, auspices and auguries." (739)

LS: You see, theology, like astrology: speaking. Astrology, the speaking of the stars, what the stars tell men. Theology is the science not of the gods, but of what the gods tell, saying their oracles.

Regarding this whole section, at the end of which we have more or less arrived, one would [really] have to[23] consider paragraph 688. And one can state this overall thesis as follows: the whole is originally the family or, in a later stage, the city, which always means of course this city to which the individual people belong—what Plato calls the cave. This Platonic thought is here; it's implied. And the ascent from this primary whole to the true whole comes only with the emergence of philosophy.

So this was our leftover from the last meeting. We turn now to the eleventh section, Poetic Geography. Yes, here there is also—let us see, let us see. Read that very slowly, and Mr. Rotella, watch the text.

Mr. Reinken: "It remains for us now to cleanse the other eye of poetic history, namely poetic geography. By that property of human included among the Axioms—" (741)

Mr. Rotella: . . . .

LS: Properties of human natures which we have—

Mr. Rotella: . . . *which* by that property.

LS: But this is not important for our point. You can omit that until he comes to axioms. "Which—"

Mr. Reinken: "'in describing unknown or distant things—"

LS: Ya, unknown and distant things, yes?

Mr. Reinken: "'in respect of which they either have not had the true idea themselves or wish to explain it to others who do not have it, men make use of the semblances of things known or near at hand'—" (741)

LS: Ya, but here it's the same: *sconosciute*.

Mr. Rotella: *Conosciute*.[vi]

LS: If the first is translated by "unknown," then the second must be done by "unknown." But of course, the text—there may be a printing error, that I do not know.[24] He translates it differently because he looks up paragraph 122, which is the axiom, and in which of course what he says[25] seems to be much more sensible: that we explain unknown and foreign things by their similarities with known and near things. But for all we know, Vico might have changed the thought and made it more subtle, because how truly do people really know these near things? This is one of the things which one would have to go back [to]—I am afraid in this case, even to the manuscript, which I suppose is not difficult because the manuscript has been preserved, I think; it's in Naples. And one could get money from a foundation [LS and students laugh] and then have a photo made.[26]

What he develops here, then, is this. Poetic geography is of Greek origin. And the alternative which he discusses is this: the names of towns, mountains, etc., in new lands are given by the immigrants in accordance with their domestic customs. Well, New York and many other—New Amsterdam, or whatever you pick—i.e., they are given Greek and Phoenician names and so on, and this leads to certain difficulties. In 742—Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question . . . puts this, which isn't a direct quote, into quotation marks, and says: "As was in the Axioms."

LS: Ya, you see—well, if Vico does such funny . . . it is perfectly possible that he quotes even himself, not literally. I mean—

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Ya, but[27] we do not know whether it's not a printing error. In another case I found a text printed in Nicolini's commentary: it is stated that this was a printing error. So there was one case where the text reads "philosophic" and it was "philologic," and he corrects that. Later, not here. In other words, it's not a perfect text which we have.

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, but at one point it is very obvious because the first *conosciute* is in the paragraph 122 translated by . . . .

LS: In paragraph 122 I think the only difference is that in the second case in paragraph 122—

[vi] As will become more clear below, it appears that Mr. Rotella's text reads "*conosciute* ['known']," whereas Strauss's reads "*sconosciute* ['unknown']."

Mr. Rotella: In paragraph 122 it's *conosciute*.

LS: In the second case.

Mr. Butterworth: Whereas the first one is *non conosciute*.

LS: Ya, that is very well known. And of course it is not quite literal: he says *conosciute e presenti*, and here he says *conosciute e vicine.* So of course he doesn't—that's not proper procedure if[28] you quote literally when you quote. And this elementary rule was as well-known in 1740 as it is now.

Student: In my text . . . .

LS: Ya, this might be the proper reading; it might also be one of these corrections of the text which editors sometimes make.

Student: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . . Nicolini.

LS: That's also Nicolini. We also have Nicolini . . . .

Student: I think that this is the more reliable one; the one that Mr. Miller has is more reliable.

LS: Oh, I see. Well, at any rate, well if there is someone really interested in Vico, he will have to look at the manuscripts.

Student: But what is the consequence . . . .

LS: It's not very important; I took it only as a little specimen of Vico's procedure. We will come across a passage later[29] [in which] I believe[30] he almost says in so many words that changes in quotations are something which may be valid. But let us go on. Let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Within Greece itself, accordingly—" 742?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Within Greece itself, accordingly, lay the original East called Asia or India, the West called Europe or Hesperia, the North called Thrace or Scythia, and the South called Libya or Mauretania."

LS: In other words, it is clear that these are the original names of these certain— [LS writes on the blackboard] If this is Greece . . . and here is Asia; and when they begin to travel and discover the coast opposite, what we now call Asia Minor, that they . . . Asia. And when they go still

further east and see that there is still something further, if they call that Asia and that is called only Asia Minor, et cetera.

Now the principle is the same as was observed by a biblical critic whom he knew, as you could see from the index [LS writes on the blackboard], Isaac de la Peyrère. He wrote in Latin, 1655. He is the one who discovered the pre-Adamites[vii]—they are mentioned; men prior to Adam—having this theory that Adam is the ancestor only of the Jews, a part of the human race, but that there were other men prior to Adam. You know, the Jews are only one special nation, and not the oldest nation. Now[31] Peyrère makes very much of the fact that[32] the same Hebrew word means both the land, i.e. Palestine in the case of the Jews, and the earth, so that the expression "God of the whole earth" (as it is usually translated) means also the God of the whole land, i.e. of Palestine. This parochialism of early nations is the same thought which he has here and he knows that.[33] There will be another quotation from Peyrère which we will have for later.

Now in 743 he says that civilization goes from west to east, whereas in 736 he says just the opposite. This contradiction was pointed out to me by Nicolini. So let us turn to the end of paragraph 752. We must make some—well, we can read the whole paragraph 752; it's short.

Mr. Reinken:

> In like manner the Eridanus, into which Phaethon fell must have been the Danube in Greek Thrace, which flows into the Euxine. Later, when the Greeks observed that the Po is the other river in the world which flows from west to east like the Danube, they called it the Eridanus, and the mythologists thus had it that Phaethon fell in Italy. But it was only the tales of their own heroic history, not that of other nations, which the Greeks attached to the stars, among which is Eridanus.

LS: Ya. What does he mean by that? I just wonder whether he doesn't mean that the Bible in contradistinction to the Greek myth also embodies Egyptian and other matter. I do not know. 756.

Mr. Reinken: "The Laestrygonians in Homer's time must have been a people of Greece, and when he says that they have the longest days he must mean the longest in Greece and not in the whole world."

LS: Ya. Does this remind you of something? "Longest days." I happen to remember—

Student: Joshua?

LS: Exactly. In the book of Joshua, chapter 10, verses 13 to 14. I will read you the translation: "The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it." And to which this La Peyrère makes the following commentary (which I can give you only in my paraphrase because I didn't have access to La Peyrère's book): the day of that battle of Gibeon was the longest that ever was in *Gibeon*, but not on the whole earth—for example, not in the polar regions, where there are days whole months long. I mean, this piece of physical knowledge which Peyrère possessed in 1655 was surely also

[vii] See footnote vi, session 5.

possessed by Vico in 1740.[34] Yes. From the . . . things, this piece mentioned in the second and central item of these three numbered things as you can . . . look up. 758.

Mr. Reinken: "On these same principles of poetic Greek geography it is possible to solve many great difficulties in the ancient history of the East—"

LS: Of the Orient. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "arising from the fact that many people who must have been situated in the Orient itself have been taken for very distant peoples, particularly toward the north and south." (758)

LS: In other words, we must apply these findings of Vico to the ancients' history of the Orient as well. 761.

Mr. Reinken:

> Now, since we have returned from the Latins to the Greeks, we may note that the latter, as they went out over the world, spread everywhere (vainglorious men as they were!) the fame of the Trojan War and the wanderings of the heroes, both those of the Trojans such as Antenor, Capys, and Aeneas, and those of the Greeks such as Meneleus, Diomed, and Ulysses. They observed scattered through the world a type of nation founder like their Theban Hercules, and so they spread abroad the name of their Hercules, so that Varro was able to enumerate a good forty Herculeses among the ancient nations, and affirmed that the Latin Hercules had been called the god Fidius. Thus, it came about that, with a vainglory equaling that of the Egyptians (who said that their Jove Ammon was the most ancient Jove in the world—

LS: The most ancient of all the others in the world; he is very emphatic. "And all the Herculeses."

Mr. Reinken: "and that all the Herculeses of the other nations had taken their name from the Egyptian Hercules, in accordance with two axioms set forth above, erroneously believing themselves to be the oldest nation in the world)—" (761)

LS: Of all others in the world: he's also emphatic. Their gods are the oldest of all gods; they have the oldest nation. Well, I think one can say he discusses here[35] what for him is the error underlying the notion of the chosen people and how that error arose: that each nation claims to be the oldest and its gods to be the oldest.

There are also things which are very strange in 770 following. Read only the end of paragraph 772.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus, by two different manifestations of the conceit of the nations—that of the Greeks in making such a stir about the Trojan war, and that of the Romans in boasting an illustrious foreign origin—the Greeks foisted their Aeneas upon the Romans and the latter finally accepted him as their founder." (772)

LS: Ya. God knows what this implies, a twofold story. It is possible to give a very limited interpretation of that. Whether this is an examination of the exodus from Egypt and Moses' legislation as originating in Jewish Alexandria—but there may be other things; it is very complicated. Let us turn to paragraph 776.

Mr. Reinken: "All ancient geography is strewn with such altars. To begin with Asia, Keller in his *Notitia orbis antiqui* states that all the cities of Syria had the word Aram placed before or after their specific designations, whence Syria itself was called Aramea or Aramia." (776)

LS: 778, in the middle of the paragraph, when he speaks of the Syriate of language. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "But in the Syrian language the word *ari* means lion."

LS: The same is true of Hebrew, as he surely knew. Here, then he says a little bit later: "This word—"

Mr. Reinken: "This word *ara*, uniform in sound and meaning in so many nations—" (778)

LS: "Nations" not *genti*. *Nazioni.* And here he has used a term which is surely Hebrew and—yes, and this implies—if you consider the whole context, since this is such a basic word—*ara*, *ari*, or whatever it may be according to Vico. It's a very wide construction that he makes; but we are not concerned with soundness or unsoundness first, but with what he means. The common origin of all nations. Of all nations.

779, that's the conclusion of this part; it is interesting because of another reference to what common sense means. Read only the second half of that paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> For in these, as in embryos or matrices, we have discovered the outlines of all recondite wisdom. And it may be said that in the fables the nations have in a rough way and in the language of the human senses described the beginnings of this world of sciences, which the specialized studies of scholars have since clarified for us by reasoning and generalization. From all this we may conclude what we set out to show in this [Second] book: that the theological poets were the sense and the philosophers the intellect of human wisdom. (779)

LS: Ya, we see now again, with a view to common sense of which he spoke before in quite a few—sense has to be taken very literally. The common sensing in contradistinction to the common intellect. All recondite wisdom has its origin in these things which Vico found in the beginnings of the gentiles. Where is the place for revelation? Or a defense of Vico's orthodoxy could take this form, but why did he never himself settle it? When he speaks of all the recondite, all the concealed wisdom, must this be understood in contradistinction to the revealed wisdom? . . . . One could say that, but the strange thing is that he does not bring it up.

Paragraph 780. Now we come to the Third—[the] center Book: the close connection between the end of the Second and the beginning of the Third, as you will see.

Mr. Reinken:

> Although our demonstration in the preceding book that poetic wisdom was the vulgar wisdom of the peoples of Greece, who were first theological and later heroic poets, should carry as a necessary consequence that the wisdom of Homer was not at all different in kind, yet, as Plato left firmly fixed the opinion that Homer was endowed with sublime recondite wisdom (and all the other philosophers have followed in his train, with Plutarch foremost, writing an entire book on the matter), we shall here examine particularly if Homer was ever a philosopher. (780)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So [what] we have seen firstly is that all the recondite wisdom is contained in early Greek thought, in the middle of Greek thought. And now[36] here he says in so many words [that] there was no recondite wisdom in poetic wisdom. You have to—[37] [what] is this vulgar American expression? "You fix, you make—"

Student: You place your money—

LS: You place your money and you make your choice. Yes.

Student: But in the translation it reads that the outlines of recondite wisdom—I mean in that last paragraph, 779, I . . . .

LS: Ya, it's the sketch. Yes, still it was sketched, the whole recondite wisdom; and therefore of course by intelligent understanding you can enucleate this recondite wisdom from the myth. And here is the opposite: I mean not only that Homer was not—Homer was surely not a philosopher, this much is clear. But[38] when you see the clear opposition between the vulgar *sapiens* (wisdom) of the peoples of Greece opposed to the sublime, recondite wisdom.

Student: Would you not want to say that the senses of the poets, including Homer, are not at all at variance with or contrary to the intellect—

LS: Ya, but one could say that and it has been said by many people, but I think that's exactly what Vico denies. Yes?

Different Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, that is also one way of putting it, understating the difficulty. But the other statements are very clear: the savagery—take only the moral side of the matter—the savagery of the early beings, the gentleness of the later; you can say of course [that there was already gentleness implied] in this savagery because people, human beings, could not live in the long run on such a savage basis.[39] Yes? But[40] nevertheless it is a hard way of saying what you see more manifestly . . . .

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, I think, I believe they changed deeply—not a lot; I mean they didn't become angels out of beasts, surely not. But they became human beings out of beasts and that is something. 781, the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Let us concede to Homer what certainly must be granted, that he had to conform to the quite vulgar sensibilities and hence the vulgar customs of the barbarous Greece of his day, for such vulgar perceptions and vulgar customs provide the poets with their proper material." (781)

LS: Ya. Now this I think is clear: the character of [the] vulgar is fundamentally opposed to that of philosophy. In 782 he gives[41] [his] criticism of the traditional view of poetry. Let us read that.

Mr. Reinken:

> Nevertheless, if the purpose of poetry is to tame the ferocity of the vulgar whose teachers the poets are, it was not the part of a wise man, versed in such fierce sensibilities and customs, to arouse admiration of them in the vulgar in order that they should take pleasure in them and be confirmed in them by that pleasure. Nor was it the part of a wise man to arouse pleasure in the villainous vulgar at the villainies of the gods, to say nothing of the heroes. As, for example, we read of Mars in the midst of a contest calling Minerva a dog-fly and of Minerva punching Diana, and of Agamemnon and Achilles, the latter the greatest of the Greek heroes and the former the head of the Greek league, and both of the kings, calling each other dogs, as servants in popular comedies would scarcely do nowadays. (782)

LS: Sure. So in other words, this is his refutation of the traditional view that the poets are teachers, and especially teachers of virtue. The facts which he gives here about Homer are[42] only partly correct; we dismiss that. I doubt this would be a very interesting question for any close student of Vico, because Vico knew Homer, to see why he changed the facts in the various ways he does. I cannot be of any help in this matter. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I think a quite other conclusion can be drawn about Homer, and tends to be—that Homer, in his mocking presentation of the heroes and gods, is someone much closer to the human age—

LS: Ya, sure. We'll come to that later. But I would like to mention only one thing: Is this the traditional view[43] of poetry, that the poets are the teachers of the vulgar and therefore their primary function is to domesticate the ferocity of the vulgar?[44] Plato is of course[45] the target of Vico's attack, and[46] now what does Plato understand by poetry? Precisely when he discusses this scene, this very beautiful scene between Agamemnon and Achilles[47]—you know, where the subordinate Achilles, in a wholly undisciplined manner, tells his commanding officer Agamemnon: You have the eyes of a dog and the heart of a deer, which is of course the most perfect insight imaginable, because doggish eyes are very cowardly, and yet dogs bite. On the other hand, the deer is a very beautiful creature and yet[48] can save itself only by flight. So to combine these outstanding qualities of these two animals is a perfect insight for a warrior. Plato

says, when he speaks about that—or rather Socrates—that this must be stricken out precisely because it is so poetic. So in other words, what poetry Plato approved of or used in the cities is one thing; what he regarded as in itself poetic is an entirely different thing. So[49] for Plato, Homer was of course a very unsatisfactory teacher of the people, there's no question. And if Homer has any merit, as Plato surely thought, it[50] would have to be defined in entirely different terms. But I suppose the crude academic teaching of the time was—not only of that time—was that poetry has simply the function of instruction, for which not all poetry is of course suited.[51]

I learned in Nicolini that these criticisms of Homer as he states them were made—especially in this paragraph but also elsewhere—they are made by these Frenchmen, I forgot their names—the fellow who wrote this thing of the . . . . What is his name?[viii] . . . No, I do not know his name. There was this famous *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns in France, and the chief target was Homer. Homer was—and of course the classical tragedies and comedies; and [the ancients][52] were attacked by the moderns because of their indecency[53]. And naturally, classical French literature—I mean the tragedy as well as the comedy—is much more *décent*, decent, than the Greek classical ones, there is no question about that. Now Vico polemicizes . . . implicitly against these French critics of Homer, whom I have never read; but I know that they played a great role in criticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. And then the big outbursts in the latter, the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Germany above all—you know, out of which then there grew the Romantic movement. The narrow confines of French classical poetry with its severe rules—unity of time, unity of place, very literally understood,[54] the whole thing [must take place] preferably at the same place and within one day, you know, which was a kind myth understood . . . . It was a big, big affair; and also the severe limitation of the words which can be used. And[55] savage Shakespeare was of course the authority for those who attacked French classicists, you know, because it's the care for unity of time and place, as you know. Good. Yes, 783.

Mr Reinken:

> But what name under heaven more appropriate than sheer stupidity can be given to the wisdom of his captain, Agamemnon? For he has to be compelled by Achilles to do his duty in restoring Chryseis to Chryses, her father, the priest of Apollo, the god who, on account of this rape, was decimating the Greek army with a cruel pestilence. And then, holding himself offended, Agememmnon though to regain his honor by an act of justice of a piece with his wisdom, by wrongfully stealing Briseis—

LS: And so on. Read only the end of this paragraph: "Here is the inimitable Homer." Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Here is the Homer unrivaled in creating poetic characters, as we shall show them to be farther on, of whom the very greatest are so discordant with this civil human nature of ours, yet they are perfectly decorous in relation to the punctilious heroic nature, as we have said above." (783)

LS: Ya. Now here of course, the question—what you said, Mr. . . . , Vico apparently does not consider the possibility that Homer was not an admirer of his heroes and his gods; that is in no

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[viii] Strauss might be referring to Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), who wrote his "Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes" in 1688.

way considered by Vico. And this would of course alter the statement of the question very radically if this would have to be considered. For him it is good enough that Homer is the document of heroic morality, and I think that is the thesis of present-day Homeric studies—I mean, in a simple way. Is this not so?

Student: That's the rule.

LS: Ya. You see how right[56] Croce was when he said: Vico, that's the twentieth century. No, he said the nineteenth, but we can improve on that [laughter] and say: And the twentieth century. Good. 788. By the way, to satisfy Mr. Nicgorski, in paragraph 787: "hence one has to deny to Homer any and every[57] recondite wisdom." One has to deny it;[58] if you take this together with the first paragraph here you have your contradiction, a clear contradiction. You know? *Every*—in other words, not even that origin or germ which . . . . Mr. . . . .

Student: I'm not very happy with that either, about "any kind"; because before, for example, he spoke of the poets' understanding of . . . that is, Jove is the poetic . . . of the gods . . . .

LS: Ya, but he—I mean what does he do with that? I mean, what does he do? He refers to that; yes, but is Jove really that? I mean the Jove as understood by the poetic theologian: Is he the ether or air?

Student: No, but for his . . . process . . . .

LS: Ya, what we would have to do[59], in this case as well as in other case[s], [is] to put together all statements of Vico—all on this subject, all of the statements and complete—and then we will[60] get a whole rainbow, and we must see whether the intermediate solutions are really compatible with what the whole thing is about. Mr. Nicgorski?

Mr. Nicgorski: Would it be possible to say something like wisdom, esoteric wisdom, is necessity and utility, most correctly understood; and what the poet sees is—or represents [is] *the* understanding of necessity and utility present, possible at that time. And in this sense the outlines of esoteric wisdom—

LS: Yes, but he means even something else: there were secrets (we'll come to that later, in our next assignment)—there were secrets in that early time but secrets of an entirely different kind, namely, that which the plebs must not under any circumstances know.

Student: But why?

LS: And yes, also in other things; you know, that kind of secretiveness of a political nature which is not exactly[61] what[62] [is meant] here by recondite wisdom. Someone else raised his hand. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . Mr. Nicgorski's phrasing of it . . . said earlier, philosophers can't go up any farther than the poet. This doesn't mean that the poets apprehend what they say fully; their minds are not capable of grasping—

LS: Ya, but[63] then you have as he made clear . . . we saw this today. But strictly speaking they do not see the world of nations, of course; they see the world of that nation to which they belong. And therefore as soon as you see *n* nations, of these early nations, having the same structure as Vico does, then you are of course completely out of the element of poetry, of this early poetry, the poetic theologians.

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, they knew nothing but their own—I mean, the world of nations. Well, first we have *n* worlds. The first is the world in which any early nation lives: its world, wholly ignorant of any other world. We have read statements to that effect. Then of course they gradually become familiar with other nations, but this does not lead—and they are influenced by each other, but this does not yet lead to a concept of the world of nations. That's a philosophic concept which presupposes the knowledge of the world of nature, on the basis of which the idea arises that one must also study the world of the nations. As I called it before, "social physics" as distinguished from physics proper.

Mr. Miller: Yes, I see that argument, but I must be missing something. You referred earlier to a paragraph in which he speaks of the diffusion of science . . . and I realize there is a problem about—a serious one about how nations affect one another. But what you just said puzzled me as much as what you said earlier about *n* different kinds of natural right. It seems to me there is one kind of natural right—

LS: Yes.

Mr. Miller: to the mind of Vico, when you have his—

LS: Yes, yes. But since these various natural right[s]—if you remember this, [LS writes on the blackboard] you have[64] the Cyclopes, family stage; then you have the patrician stage; then you have the human state, which is subdivided into democracy and monarchy. The natural right in the three cases is quite different.

Mr. Miller: I see that. I was thinking of the natural . . . .

LS: Ya, but here in this stage there is a natural right, but the people do not know it to be natural; they know it to be imposed by gods or inherited from gods. They do not know it is natural. That does make a difference.

Mr. Miller: Then they cannot question—

LS: Of course they cannot question—

Mr. Miller: . . . and presumably the patricians are—perhaps they don't know they have the secret, they only know—

LS: Oh, they know in a very practical way: they do not admit the plebs to have auspices of their own, and since they don't have auspices they cannot have true property, they cannot have true marriage—and that is, they see the utility of that for themselves very clearly. I mean a certain low-class, calculating prudence is not beyond the capacity of most people—

Mr. Miller: No. no—

LS: and most stages of the development.

Mr. Miller: No, he says the Romans were . . . because they were so grasping they—

LS: The Romans were particularly good at acquisition, which doesn't mean that they were wise . . . . Good.

Mr. Butterworth: When you put . . . on the board there, it changes what you said earlier. I thought you said earlier that there were *n* natural rights; now when—

LS: Oh, sure; easily three fundamental—yes.[65] You know one can call three "*n*"—not true? *N* may be equal to three. [Much laughter] According to modern mathematics, there's no problem. Even according to Aristotle. When you say [that] three is in that sense the first number; that's the first when you saw "all," there must be more than two. If there are one or two you never say all. Try it—to say of two people: All were there. You can't.

Mr. Butterworth: I was hoping that you would reply in another way and say that there is still *n* in each one of these stages; there may be any number of sub-ages.

LS: Ya, sure; I was implicitly providing for all kinds of complications. But the interesting ones are these. Yes?

Student: But surely Vico's whole effort is to reduce all these nations to one pattern, with the curious problem about the Jews, how do they—

LS: Yes, well that is—as I read[66] [the] book now, this is a big question which he imposes on his readers. You figure out for yourself how he, on the basis of these principles, would explain Judaism and Christianity. 788, let us read that.

Mr. Reinken: "Such was the rec—"

LS: This is the chapter dealing with the fatherland of Homer. The fatherland of Homer. Yes?—read that.

Mr. Reinken: "Such was the recondite wisdom hitherto attributed to Homer; let us now examine his origin."

LS: So in other words, there is no recondite wisdom. That's the clearest statement because there is imagination and passion, but not reason, et cetera, et cetera. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Almost all the cities of Greece claimed to be his birthplace and there were not lacking those who asserted that he was an Italian Greek. To determine his native land Leo Allacci in his *Fatherland of Homer* spends much effort in vain. But since there has come down to us no writer more ancient than Homer, as Josephus stoutly maintains against the grammarian Apion, and since the writers—" (788)

LS: Now stop here one moment. Josephus, a Jew, says that there is no older writer than Homer; he omits here any qualification like "Greek writer," or something. I have not looked up Josephus; it is perfectly possible that Josephus said "no older *Greek* writer." I would assume that; but here is what Vico says. By implication he suggested that Homer is prior to Moses. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken: "and since the writers came long after him, we are—"

LS: "*The* writers," yes? There are no writers before him. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "we are obliged to apply our metaphysical criticism, treating him as the founder of a nation, as he has been held to be of Greece, and to discover the truth both as to his age and as to his fatherland from Homer himself." (788)

LS: You see here, with what right can he call Homer the father of a nation? This is not the tradition about Homer. The greatest and first Greek poet, yes. And the greatest of all poets, [67]sure, but not the father of a nation. But if you look at Moses it makes immediate sense: the Mosaic legislation. By the way, the fatherland of Homer: this also leads to the question of the fatherland of Moses. Now there is this statement [of] Machiavelli, this fellow, this compatriot of Vico, in *The Prince* (I think it is probably in chapter six) when he says Moses nobilitated his fatherland.[ix] What does Machiavelli mean here by fatherland? That's Machiavelli's way of putting the problem. Egypt? Because if you understand by fatherland the land in which a man is born— or can you call the fatherland of a man the land toward which he is led, guiding his nation? That's not very helpful. I put this somewhere together because Machiavelli's use of the term fatherland is quite striking. Another point regarding this subject, 794.

Mr. Reinken: "The arts of casting in low relief and of engraving on metals had already been invented, as is shown, among other examples, by the shield of Achilles, to which we have referred above. Painting had not yet been invented. For casting abstracts the surfaces of things along with some relief, and engraving does the same with some depth; but painting abstracts the surfaces absolutely, and this is a labor calling for the greatest ingenuity. Hence neither Homer nor Moses—" (794)

LS: You see? I mean they are mentioned here together. Very strange. But no quotation, of course. 797 to -98. Yes, here he has again what he does frequently in this book: numbered sections. You know,[68] I have learned from Mr. Butterworth that the numbers of the paragraphs are the work of Nicolini: they are not genuine. Although if the paragraphs are in the original, then of course Vico himself may have numbered them without adding the numbers to his writing.

[ix] Strauss's odd choice of words is influenced by the Italian word *nobilitata* used by Machiavelli in the *Prince*, chapter 6.

But these[x] are clearly Vico's own. Now, 797 to—these are the center, these ten paragraphs. Let us read these two.

Mr. Reinken: "The coach of Priam, in which he drives to Achilles, is made of cedar wood, and cave of Calypso is fragrant with its perfumes, which betrays a sensuous refinement that was still foreign to the pleasure of the Romans when they were most bent on wasting their substance in luxury in the days of Nero and Heliogabalus.[xi] We read of voluptuous baths in the dwelling of Circe." (796-797)

LS: Ya, good. Now again, I can't help thinking of an Old Testament parallel: the famous problem of Leviticus, the Third Book of the Books of Moses, the detailed description of the sacrificial laws—incense of course plays a great role; and this is presented as having been the law laid down[69] in the desert. The migration. This was a major problem in the nineteenth century; I don't know if you have heard of Wellhausen.[xii] The most (how should I?) *génial*, the most poetic of the Old Testament critics; and this was a key point for him: that this must be long after of the desert period because of the non-desert-like character of the description. I think we cannot completely disregard these possibilities. 806, let us turn—and 807. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Well, if you consider it properly, a kind of "quote luxury unquote," meaning richness, wealth, which was not possible in the early time of Homer, yes?—says Vico. The parallel in the desert, under very harsh and difficult circumstances.

Good. These paragraphs, 806 to 807 deal with Homer's art, and non-philosophers. Perhaps we should read these two paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken: "The complete absence of philosophy which we have shown in Homer, and our discoveries concerning his fatherland and age—"

LS: In other words, there is no fatherland clearly recognizable, nor an age; one doesn't know where to put it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "arouse in us a strong suspicion that he may perhaps have been quite simply a man of the people. This suspicion—"

LS: "*Uomo volgare*"—which is surely a man of the people, but it has of course also the implication of *vulgus*, yes? Good.

Mr. Reinken:

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[x] I.e. the ten sections bearing Roman numerals that appear between paragraphs 792 and 803.
[xi] End of paragraph 797, beginning of 798.
[xii] Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), a German biblical scholar and author of works on the Pentateuch, Islam, and the New Testament, the best-known of which is *Prolegomena zur Geschicte Israels* (1882).

> This suspicion is confirmed by Horace's observation in his *Art of Poetry* concerning the desperate difficulty of creating fresh characters or persons of tragedy after Homer, on account of which he advises poets to take their characters from Homer's poems. Now this grave difficulty must be taken in conjunction with the fact that the personages of the New Comedy are all of artificial creation; indeed there was an Athenian law requiring the New Comedy to appear on the stage with characters entirely fictitious, and the Greeks managed this so successfully that the Latins, for all their pride, despaired of competing, as Quintilian acknowledged in saying, "We do not contend the Greeks in comedy." (806)
>
> To Horace's difficulty we must add two others of wider scope. For one thing, how is it that Homer, who came first, was such an inimitable heroic poet, while tragedy, which was born later, began with the crudeness familiar to everybody and which we shall later describe more in detail? And for another, how is it that Homer, who preceded philosophy and the poetic and critical arts, was yet the most sublime of all the sublime poets, and that after the invention of philosophies of the arts of poetry and criticism there was no poet who could come within a long distance of competing with him? However, putting aside our two difficulties, that of Horace combined with what we have said of the New Comedy should have spurred scholars like Patrizzi, Scaliger, and Castelvetro and other valiant masters of the poetic art to investigate the reason for the difference. (807)

LS: So in other words, a clear statement of the problem, isn't it? And now the solution at the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "The reason cannot be found elsewhere than in the origin of poetry, as discovered above in the Poetic Wisdom, and consequently in the discovery of the poetic characters in which alone consists the essence of poetry itself." (808)

LS: Ya, that is a key statement. In other words, if you understand what poetic characters are, and—or remember it, then we have a solution to the problem. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> For the New Comedy portrays our present human customs, on which the Socratic philosophy had meditated, and hence, from the latter's general maxims concerning human morals, the Greek poets, profoundly steeped in that doctrine (as was Menander for example, in comparison with whom Terence was called even by the Latins "half a Menander"), could create certain luminous examples of ideal men, by the light and splendor of which—

LS: More literally, of "men of idea." The adjective "ideal," I believe, [70]was the adjective—yes, [in] history *ideali* occurs, but not here. So in other words there is a poetry which is post-philosophic, and the chief document of that is the New Comedy, which is not too bad, even today. But surely Homeric poetry is pre-philosophic. Yes. And they have ideal men—types,[71] like Theophratus' characters, which played such a role for comedy throughout the ages. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "by the light and splendor of which they might awaken the vulgar, who are as quick to learn from convincing examples as they are incapable of understanding from reasoned maxims. The Old Comedy took arguments or subjects from real life and made plays of them just as they were, as the wicked Aristophanes once did with the good Socrates thus bringing on his ruin." (808)

LS: Not only good: very good. *Buonissimo*. Yes. And ruined him, which is a gross overstatement. Good.

Mr. Reinken:

> But tragedy puts on the scene heroic hatred, scorn, wrath, and revenge, which spring from sublime natures which naturally are the source of sentiments, modes of speech, and actions in general that are wild, crude, and terrible. Such arguments are clothed with an air of marvel, and all these matters are in closest conformity among themselves, and uniform in their subjects. Such works the Greeks could produce only in the time of their heroism, at the end of which Homer must have come. (808)

LS: Ya, Homer comes at the *end* of the heroic age. Yes, I think we can leave it at this. The solution is that the poetic characters proper, which are not those characters described by Theophrastus, the . . . [xiii] and so, you know, [72]characters which can be called by abstract nouns, but poetic characters which can only be called by a proper noun. Achilles, Odysseus, and so on: these are the poetic characters. But they are also a[nother] kind of[73] [type][74]. He calls the same type in the next paragraph the "*generi fantastici*," i.e. *generi* created by the imagination, or the fantasy, not by reason—as the . . . the misanthrope, the *Avare*, the greedy man, [75]or the imaginary sick man. Think of Molière's types: [none of] these are[76] proper names. And in the comedy they had to be given a proper name, naturally, because they were then characters; but[77] you can't describe the subject of, say,[78] the *Antigone*[79]—[as] the heroic virgin; that would be very inadequate as a title of *Antigone*. How would you call *Oedipus*? You cannot—how would you call *Madame Bovary* for that matter, or *Anna Karenina*? Try. Well, in another case Tolstoy did find such a title, *War and Peace*, as you know, but this is very interesting: it ends like a treatise on human life, as you know. Tolstoy is frequently blamed for this end[ing] of *War and Peace*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I'm getting a little confused on the chronology of paragraph 808, in which it seems to go: tragedy, Old Comedy, New Comedy, as the developing things. But does Homer come in after tragedy? Tragedy is heroic—

LS: Now let us first see. He speaks first of course of Homer, and then he turns to the New Comedy as[80] [what is] diametrically opposite. Yes? Then he goes back from the New Comedy of Menander to the Old Comedy of Aristophanes; and then he goes still further back to tragedy; and then he goes still further back to Homer. And you do not recognize the last step, because he—

[xiii] In this mostly inaudible sentence Strauss appears to list several of the types described by Theophrastus, such as "the ironical man," "the boor," or "the gossip."

Mr. Reinken: No "such works," meaning—when he says "such works the Greeks could produce only in the time of their heroism—"

LS: Ya, but "works" are not *operi*, [they are] *lavori*—"such efforts," that would probably be better, Mr. Rotella? Lest we think of the tragedies proper; what he means, I think are—

Mr. Reinken: The themes of the tragedies—

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Okay. And then Homer, and then the—

LS: The subjects of the tragedy as here described are of course also the Homeric characters, you know? Ferocious, ferocity, atrocity. And the question which he does not here raise, which he will take up later: the difference between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and he makes the assertion that the *Odyssey* is much later than *Iliad* because it is much more humane. We'll come to that, we cannot—

Ya, in paragraph 809 he speaks of the fantastic *generi* meaning not concepts; and later on "These two," [81]toward the end of paragraph 809: "These two characters."

Mr. Reinken: "since they had been created by an entire nation, could only be conceived as naturally uniform (in which uniformity, agreeable to the common sense of an entire nation, alone consists the decorum or beauty and charm of a fable); and, since they were created by powerful imaginations—"

LS: "by *most* powerful."

Mr. Reinken: By most powerful imaginations, "they could not be created as anything but sublime. Hence derive two eternal properties of poetry: one that poetic sublimity is inseparable from popularity, and the other that peoples who have first created heroic characters for themselves will afterwards apprehend human customs only in terms of characters made famous by luminous examples." (809)

LS: "*Most* luminous examples," yes. So in other words, poetry is nothing if it not a creation of the folk mind. How this is related to the fact that there are individual poets is not yet clear. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: It seems a rather startling assertion that[82] consistency in the character betrays the presence of many hands in its creation.

LS: No, in itself it betrays only the community; in other words, eccentric monsters, which are intelligible only to very few who happen to have—are not good. It must be their typical heroes as they are understood by . . . . a Shakespearean play, the Shakespearean histories are a good example of what he means. Everyone knew of Henry V and knew of what was admirable in him[83], and what was not admirable in Richard III, and this kind of thing. Now there is one difficulty[84] which I believe[85] will become clearer in the sequel: What precisely are these *generi*

fantastici—these "imaginary ideas" with this very powerful appeal? What are they in the highest case? Or differently stated: What kind of poets were the first poets who created all that sublimity? How does he call them: "theological poets." He does not call Homer a theological poet . . . . In other words, the highest case of these fantastic *generi* are the gods. You cannot possibly translate Zeus, or Hera, or Ares by abstract nouns; but you can say Ares is the god of war, and Hephaestus is the god of smithing, or what have you. But so much is missing: Why is the god of the smithing lame? That's not immediately evident; there must be some other things. I mean that there are some generalities noticeable is true—I mean, that is true that was always recognized somehow when people understood by Zeus [that] Zeus is of course the ruler of gods and men, and in more heavenly, or ruler of the whole, than any other. But[86] he has a proper name; this shows that he is one of these fantastical *generi* and not a rational concept. In paragraph 819 you might find—but let first consider 800. I believe it is very late today, isn't it? My watch is—

Student: It's a quarter to six.

LS: Ya, should we—I think it is fair to you and perhaps also to me if we stop now. That's the last question. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Can you tell me what the logical necessity of fantastic imagination—[that] very strong imaginations create sublime images? Somehow I think the very strong imaginations create very crude images.

LS: Yes . . . . There was an axiom to this effect, that the human mind is in a sense[87] infinite, it extends beyond the known. And what does it do with the unknown, according to one axiom?

Mr. Butterworth: I can't remember what that—

LS: It makes it greater than the sublime.

Mr. Butterworth: But he doesn't mean sublime in the . . . sense that we usually use it.

LS: No. I don't believe he has this in mind, the overpowering and awe-inspiring.

Mr. Butterworth: Because the very two examples he gave, Odysseus and Achilles—

LS: The difference between Achilles—Achilles is a truly heroic character. Odysseus is a different story; it's later, a more refined stage, according to him. We must see that.

But one point I would like to mention: this reference to New Comedy here is far being accidental; that comes out later on as a very important item. I know from Nicolini that he was a very great admirer of the Roman comic poets—Plautus and Terence. Menander . . . was not known at that time, only by fragments. And this is for him the highest poetry of the human, humane stage; and that's very interesting. [It's] radically non-mythical, you know?[88] If you know why they are comedies, it's the most accessible example, showing the absurdity of vice in a very gracious manner, and making the—I mean, they do not create roaring laughter, but a humane and

gentle agreement with the lesson of the poet. And this he admires very highly; and Homer was the greater poet, but since this is a poetry which is based on the absence of reflection, reason—this is his assertion again, and since reason is higher than mere sense, it follows. So his taste is rather classicistic, I think, in spite of his discovery of the true Homer; whether this is the true Homer as he discovered it—in other words, whether his poems[89] could have been composed without thinking and rational order, that is of course a question up to the present day. You know there are still people who think it's just a chain of rhapsodies, so to speak—one made here, one made there, and so on. I do not know whether Nietzsche's lecture on the Homeric question is available in English. It is a very clear—is it? You should order that. [It's] very short, thirty pages; and it is a very clear statement of the problem of Homer as it appeared say around 1870.[xiv] But I believe it [is] not antiquated because Nietzsche speaks . . . of a time when people had become critical of the notion of the folk mind: you know, everyone, so to[90] [speak], is singing [laughter], and producing something. This had already become very questionable to Nietzsche, and especially the question of whether the Homeric poems can be understood as due to—but he still accepts the basic assertion of the Romantic view as you would see. In which edition is this? Is it in the—

Student: . . . .

LS: I do not—perhaps I do not know that. So now, Mr. . . . .

[end of tape]

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[1] Deleted "Especially—."
[2] Deleted "rejection."
[3] Deleted "the."
[4] Deleted "Still, why not—."
[5] Deleted "—I mean what was."
[6] Deleted "it."
[7] Deleted "**Student**: [inaudible words] **LS**: Pardon?"
[8] Deleted "can one can almost say."
[9] Deleted "it was still—."
[10] Deleted "Is—."
[11] Deleted "just as."
[12] Deleted "this—."
[13] Deleted "was then—Who."
[14] Deleted "—Who began motion."
[15] Deleted "was."
[16] Deleted "someone."
[17] Deleted "And this—."
[18] Deleted "he does."
[19] Moved "time."
[20] Deleted "this is one of the—."
[21] Deleted "of course, since this—."
[22] Moved "is."
[23] Moved "really."

[xiv] Strauss refers to "Homer and Classical Philology," which was an address delivered in 1869. It is available in translation at http://www.perpustakaan.depkeu.go.id/FOLDEREBOOK/Project%20Gutenberg%20(Friedrich%20Nietzsche).pdf.

[24] Deleted “Yes, but if you—.”
[25] Deleted “which.”
[26] Deleted “This I—yes.”
[27] Deleted “we have not—.”
[28] Deleted “you quote.”
[29] Deleted “on which.”
[30] Moved “in which.”
[31] Deleted “he makes—.”
[32] Deleted “the Hebrew word—.”
[33] Deleted “I will give you—.”
[34] Deleted “This—.”
[35] Deleted “how—.”
[36] Deleted “he makes—.”
[37] Deleted “how.”
[38] Deleted “here—.”
[39] Changed from: “But the other statements are very clear: the savagery—take only the moral side of the matter—the savagery of the early beings, the gentleness of the later; you can say of course in this savagery there was already implied the gentleness because people, human beings, could not live in the long run on such a savage basis.”
[40] Deleted “it is a hard way of saying it was simply—.”
[41] Deleted “the.”
[42] Deleted “not—.”
[43] Deleted “simply.”
[44] Deleted “Well there is—I mean.”
[45] Deleted “the enemy whom—.”
[46] Deleted “what does,.”
[47] Deleted “where.”
[48] Deleted “running away—.”
[49] Deleted “Plato—.”
[50] Deleted “must—.”
[51] Deleted “I read—.”
[52] Deleted “they.”
[53] Moved “the ancients.”
[54] Moved “must take place.”
[55] Deleted “what.”
[56] Deleted “Vico was when was—.”
[57] Deleted “esoteric wis—.”
[58] Deleted “I think that is—.”
[59] Moved “is” and deleted “this.”
[60] Deleted “see.”
[61] Deleted “that.”
[62] Deleted “means.”
[63] Deleted “you have—.”
[64] Deleted “the poly—.”
[65] Deleted “But some—.”
[66] Deleted “that.”
[67] Deleted “was.”
[68] Deleted “we—.”
[69] Deleted “in the desert.”
[70] Deleted “oh yes.”
[71] Deleted “types.”
[72] Deleted “who can be the—.”
[73] Deleted “types.”
[74] Deleted “but another kind.”
[75] Deleted “the other.”
[76] Deleted “all not.”
[77] Deleted “you couldn’t—.”

[78] Deleted “of.”
[79] Deleted “you cannot.”
[80] Deleted “the.”
[81] Deleted “in the paragraph.”
[82] Deleted “uniformity of—.”
[83] Deleted “and so.”
[84] Deleted “regarding.”
[85] Deleted “it.”
[86] Deleted “this—but.”
[87] Deleted “in a sense.”
[88] Deleted “These—.”
[89] Deleted “were—.”
[90] Deleted “say.”

Session 14: November 12, 1963

Leo Strauss: The conclusion is absolutely true and sensible.[i] [Neither] rational, wise lawgivers nor any rational individuals establish rationally by contract a commonwealth. That is perfectly true. And you made a number of other remarks which are quite good. I believe that you surely don't mean to say that Vico had in mind the bourgeoisie.

Student: No.

LS: Perhaps—surely the patricians are not bourgeoisie, but there is a certain analogy. His sympathies were rather on the side of the bourgeoisie. I mean, if you use this later language then, maybe they are.

There are a few points which I would like to discuss briefly. You clarified quite a few points of importance. I will mention naturally those on which I did not quite agree with you. What did you mean here, you have—yes, here I do not agree: "The benignity of reason, open and magnanimous in popular commonwealths, is in no sense better or more natural than the rigor of civil equity in aristocracies or the exclusiveness of the theocratic ages. Each stage has its own nature and, therefore, is as good as any other." Each is as natural as the other, but[1] each is [not] as good as the other. Just as, say, babyhood is as natural as adulthood, that doesn't mean that babyhood is as good as adulthood.

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but still, does it not come out clear that reason, rationality, come into their own only in the stage of the human society as distinguished from divine or heroic?

Student: I was wondering whether he would say that human reason . . . .

LS: Yes, well he surely didn't regard it as omnipotent, if you mean that. But still, the highest form of human society, I think, is the human society according to Vico.

Here, what did you mean by this expression on the same page: "The formula which won the divine sanction was: To sustain one's power one has to sustain the other fellow's imagination." On the second hearing I understand it. But still, explain it. Perhaps there were some others who had difficulty following it, this very concise sentence.

Student: What I had in mind was that if everybody . . . .

LS: Ya, but this is not as I understood it at the second reading—[2]in other words, that deception or self-deception of other fellows is the basis of the power of the rulers. That is what I understood the second time. Pardon?

Student: I meant fraud.

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: Well, whether you say fraud or deception, it is not a serious difference. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: . . . I think I have the reason to that, the missing third reason thing.

LS: What do you mean by that?

Mr. Reinken: You claimed that he picked over the third—

Student: . . . .

Mr. Reinken: 951, latter part. I think the reason it gets buried is that, well, the heroic age is the age of the state *par excellence*. It is the civil equity which is the reason of state, and it says in the . . . of 951 this *aequum bonum* or natural equity is suitable to the multitude. The princes of the state go on on the basis—

LS: We have to take up this passage, especially since this question of the *aequum bonum* or natural equity has been bothering us throughout the whole course.

Now there is another; let me first finish that. "Homer is, therefore, exactly what Vico originally set out to establish. Civil histories of ancient Greek customs, not of gods, but of heroes. And, as such, Homer is incomparable."[ii] This implies, of course, as I think that you imply throughout, that Homer is not an early poet. I mean the symbol, Homer, doesn't stand for an early poet because precisely by mirroring the changes from one stage to another, he is such an important source. He contains the history, especially if you assume that the *Odyssey* was written four or five hundred years after the *Iliad*.

What did you mean by the sentence[3], "Vico's ideal eternal history is not compatible with the scholastic succession of nations inasmuch as it vitiates the uniform law which regards the course of each nation as an autonomous instance"?

Student: I assumed that his basic premise is that even though each nation will have some peculiar differences and the external circumstances might differ,[4] if you put certain nations[5] under certain circumstances the consequences will follow in a uniform way, and the common denominator there is the common nature of nations. I took it in that sense.

LS: I understood it somewhat differently and the wording would, I think, permit of my interpretation at least as much as it would yours. Vico's eternal history is not compatible with the scholastic successions of nations, i.e. with the fact that knowledge, wisdom, scholarship, migrated from one nation—say, from the Chaldeans to the Greeks or Phoenicians, Egyptians, and so on—and therefore [that] it is not an autonomous development. And I think that is true. The autonomous development is a kind of ideal type which has to be then modified in terms of the empirical facts.

[ii] Strauss reads from the student's paper here, in the next paragraph, and in the next two quoted passages.

Then there are two points here. When you quoted Collingwood: "Vico perceives in the primitive's time far beyond the range of the usual superficial ideas in a flash as in a vision of presentiment and energy, a body of power which is now hidden and attenuated." Here we must never forget that; of course there is something true in that. But [also] that Vico's primary assertion, that the early men were polytheists, is Plato's assertion[6] in the *Laws*, Book 3, and Vico knew it, and he says it. Good.

Here you quoted a poet of the present dark time, I presume: the Golden Age when myth was not "an open empty allegory, but a living power." And when "all things were still full of God." Can you tell me who—?

Student: . . . .

LS: I see, you remember. Good. This was a very fine paper. Thank you.

We still have a backlog from last time. I think we were in paragraph 810 or thereabouts. Here we come to "Philosophic Proofs for the Discovery of the True Homer," which also consists of numbered items and this time there are twenty-eight. Now we cannot—let us read paragraph 816, which is the one in which Jesus is mentioned for the second time. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "The poetic characters, in which the essence of the fables consists, were born of the need of a nature incapable of abstracting forms and properties from subjects. Consequently they must have been the manner of thinking of entire peoples, who had been placed under this natural necessity in the times of their greatest barbarism."

LS: That we know already from last [time]; we discussed it last time. No concepts,[7] only images, but images of universal meaning, so that Achilles means not only this individual Achilles but the hero. And Draco doesn't mean this particular Athenian legislator, but the savage legislator of early times.

Mr. Reinken:

> On this there is a fine passage in Aristotle's *Ethics* in which he remarks that men of limited ideas erect every particular into a maxim. The reason must be that the human mind, which is indefinite, being constricted by the vigor of the senses, cannot otherwise express its almost divine nature than by thus enlarging particulars in imagination. It is perhaps on this account that in both the Greek and the Latin poets the images of gods and heroes always appear larger than those of men, and that in the returned barbarian times the paintings particularly of the Eternal Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary are exceedingly large. (816)

LS: Ya. Now what does he mean by that? The poetic way of thinking is that of whole peoples in the state of barbarism, i.e. it is not a privilege of geniuses. And in this stage men present universals in the form of particulars. They mean hero, but they say Achilles. But what do they do with the particulars? They do not leave them untouched: I mean, they have seen an outstanding fighter like Achilles, but they do not[8] keep this experience of Achilles as he was and universalize him; they modify him in their imagination. And what do they do? They enlarge him.[9] Yes. They

enlarge them, yes, they make them more[10] [than] life size, human size; they deify them. Someone mentioned Euhemerus[iii] last time. Who was that? Oh, Mr. Miller. Yes, that is the euhemeristic activity. They[11] enlarge human beings; they make them gods.[12] In other words, these gods represent men. Vico has to retranslate the gods and heroes into human beings in order to understand them. In this connection, the first mention of Christ as we have seen, and he gives here only an external point, namely, the more than life-size greatness of the paintings.

The next paragraph seems to be also of special importance.

Mr. Reinken: "Since barbarians lack reflection, which, when ill used, is the mother of falsehood, the first heroic Latin poets sang true histories, that is, the Roman wars—" (817)

LS: [13]Ya, in other words, there cannot be fraud proper because—and there is not a very flattering reason: they are too dumb, to put it very simply, to lie. But of course there can be objective falsehood if one may say so, namely, insofar as they err by virtue of their short minds. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And in the returned barbarian times, in virtue of this nature of barbarism, the Latin poets like Gunther, William of Apulia and others again sang nothing but history, and the romancers of the same period thought they were writing—"

LS: They literally believed to write true—you see here he makes it clear: they believed to write true histories, i.e. they claimed—they believed that they were stating the facts as they happened, but they only believed it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Even Boiardo and Ariosto, who came in an age illuminated by philosophy, took the subjects of their poems from the history of Bishop Turpin of Paris—"

LS: In other words, even though they were enlightened, this matter stemmed from an unenlightened age. But how far Boiardo and Ariosto modified that matter coming back from medieval romances, he does not say here. He will speak of Dante immediately in the sequel, as you will see.

Mr. Reinken:

> And in virtue of this same nature of barbarism, which for lack of reflection does not know how to feign (whence it is naturally truthful, open, faithful, generous and magnanimous), even Dante, though learned in the loftiest esoteric knowledge, filled the scenes of his *Comedy* with real persons and portrayed real events in the lives of the dead. For that reason he gave the name *Comedy* to his poem, for the Old Comedy of the Greeks, as we have said above, portrayed real persons in its plays. (817)

LS: I.e. contemporaries. Contemporaries who were new—not, say, Socrates is not a poetic character. This individual . . . everyone knows, or . . . or whomever he gives. Yes.

[iii] Euhemerus recorded myths in the fourth century B.C. and is taken to have interpreted myths as enlarged versions of human history. The surviving record of the a previous session does not refer to him.

Mr. Reinken:

> In this respect Dante was like Homer of the *Iliad*, which Dionysius Longinus says is all dramatic or representative, as the *Odyssey* is in all narrative. Francesco Petrarca too, though a most learned man, yet sang in Latin of the Second Carthaginian war, and his *Trionfi*, in Tuscan, which have a heroic note, are nothing but a collection of histories. And here we have a luminous proof of the fact that the first fables were histories. For satire spoke ill of persons not only real but well known; tragedy took for its arguments characters of poetic history; the Old Comedy put into its plots illustrious living persons; the New Comedy, born in times of the most lively reflection, finally invented characters entirely fictitious (just as in the Italian language the New Comedy came in again only with the marvelously learned Cinquecento): and neither among the Greeks nor among the Latins was an entirely fictitious character ever the protagonist of a tragedy. Strong confirmation of this is found in the popular taste which will not accept musical dramas, the arguments of which are always tragic, unless they are taken from history, whereas it will tolerate fictitious plots in comedies because, since they deal with private life which is not public knowledge, it believes them true. (817)

LS: Ya, that is a very complicated paragraph, as you must have seen. So[14] histories of barbarian times are of course not simply true, but only true in the view of the barbarians in question because they cannot yet make fraud. But the poets coming in the enlightened times, what is the situation of them? They take up these early, popular stories. Do they believe in their truth as the old romancers did? I think we can—although he does not say [it], the inference is clear: they do not;[15] and therefore the situation of Ariosto or Petrarca is different from that of the medieval writers.[16] But the same would seem to apply to Dante because he was learned[17] in the highest, recondite science, esoteric science.

Now how does he explain the title of Dante's chief work?[18] He says Dante presented dead human beings—dead of course because they were in *inferno* or *paradiso*, but true because they were true persons, not poetic characters. That is the reason why Dante called it comedy. That's a very complicated explanation . . . . Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: As a contemporary. As our friend Vico knew, of course. I mean, he knew Dante. But he might have used an abbreviation;[19] in many cases, I mean disregarding the exceptions, that is a, how should I say, a loose way of doing it, but not completely irrational. Just as it is of course not literally true that there were never non-mythical figures in Greek tragedies. We know through Aristotle that Agathon, a post-Euripidean tragic poet, used such purely fictitious characters. Yes, Mr. . . .

Student: I don't understand . . . .

LS: Ya, now that is a very complicated sentence. No, he says that[20] the nature of barbarism, through its lack of reflection, prevents conscious fiction, ya? And yet Dante, who did not belong

to the age of barbarism, i.e. who would have been capable of conscious fiction, did not do it. Ya, now I see his logic. But not because he could not have made it, but because he did what the New Comedy did—or what the comedy did, i.e. he takes real persons, individuals. This doesn't appear—but this is one step. How do we go from here to explain fully what he means about Dante? In other words, Dante corresponds to the Old Comedy which takes individuals known by name . . . . he takes his Florentines and other Italians, Francesca di Rimini, and whatever it may be. Dante corresponds, so to speak, to Aristophanes, not to the new comedy. That seems to be the case. Yes?

Student: . . . the devil taking his place . . .

LS: Ya, sure, it is surely—the theme of comedy and especially of the new comedy will be taken up later on. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question: Is it because Dante also wrote in verse that he qualifies for this attribute of comedy? Because if it's just that he had dead people in the play, why couldn't you—even though Vico wasn't aware of it, couldn't we attribute Rousseau's *Confessions* . . . comedy?

LS: Well, it's not quite pertinent, but still it is a kind of training in our understanding of Vico by applying Vichian concepts to phenomena which he himself didn't apply them to because he didn't know them. Now what was your point? The *Confessions*? Ah, comedy—

Mr. Butterworth: It must be more than just the characters, it must be because of the verse.

LS: The verse. But the *Confessions* are not in—

Mr. Butterworth: No. That's the reason you can call Dante's play a comedy, because it is in verse and it uses real people—

LS: Yes, but the question [that] is still, I think, more important than verse or non-verse is whether the writer idealizes his subject or not. And I am sure that Rousseau idealized . . . . And Goethe called his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, *Fiction and Truth*, which means not merely that he gives the history of his fiction, of his poetry, which he surely does, but that the whole presentation is also a piece of fiction, of his autobiography. And I think that Rousseau surely did that too.

Yes, well, let us go on and see the next paragraph please; let's read that too.

Mr. Reinken: "Since poetic characters are of this nature, their poetic allegories, as we have shown above throughout the Poetic Wisdom, must necessarily contain historical significations referring only to the earliest times of Greece." (818)

LS: The question which occurred to me in reading these two paragraphs was, again, Dante. Dante, who is treated in . . . the preceding paragraph. Dante presented true persons and true facts; but, on the other hand, where does the element of deception, of fiction, come in in Dante? That

would be the question, I think, because in the context of the whole argument of paragraph 817: no fiction in the barbaric age. No possibility of fiction. But [there is the] possibility of fiction in the enlightened age. Dante belongs to a more enlightened age. The possibility of fiction exists. What did he do? Well, if you start from Aristophanes: Aristophanes took live characters . . . or Cleon or whatever, but the stories he tells about them are surely not taken from the police records of Athens. I mean . . . . We will perhaps get a little greater clarity when we go on.

Let us read the next paragraph. We don't have to read the whole; let us read only roughly the middle of—one moment. Mr. . . .

Student: . . . paragraph 817. When he says in this respect Dante was like the Homer of the *Iliad* rather than of the *Odyssey*, in what respect does he mean that? That he comes from an enlightened age, or —

LS: Of course, he says "in this respect." He doesn't mean simply. Now in what respect, in what respect—yes, what does he say? Because he put true persons in the fable. [21]I do not know the statement of Longinus which he has in mind, and probably [what] Longinus says is very different from what Vico says anyway, so there is no irreparable harm. But we must see what he means in the context. Now what can it mean that Dante has greater similarities to the *Iliad* than to the *Odyssey*. What does that mean?

Student: . . . dramatic or representative rather than the narrative.[22] I wonder if that has any connection with what he said above about—although he lived in an age of reflection he chose not to think—if there's any link between that description of Dante and the Homer of the *Iliad*.

LS: I do not see it, but you may be right. It is a very hard passage. I do not know whether he means that there was a traditional comparison, a very crude one: the *Iliad* and tragedy, and the *Odyssey* and comedy. Now perhaps he wishes to reinforce here also the strangeness of the title, because the *Divine Comedy* reminds much more of a comedy than of a tragedy, at least surely in the first two parts. I do not know. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: Doesn't he . . . in the truth, the factuality of the Trojan War? . . . .

LS: Ya. He mentions that. Yes, but the application would be then . . . of Dante.

Mr. Miller: Yes, I know; I haven't quite thought it out—

LS: Well, you know, simply: if there is a parallel between Dante and Homer it would mean that Dante did not believe the Christian equivalent of the suffering of Homer.[23] I do not know whether he means that. Yes?

Student: Doesn't he say here that the reason that Dante's *Divine Comedy* is parallel to Homer's *Iliad* is because that's what Longinus said was a dramatic work, whereas the *Odyssey* is a narrative work? And is that—so he is saying that the *Divine Comedy* is not a narrative work?

LS: Ya, but still, what would this mean? I mean, true histories are narrative and not dramatic.

Student: Yes, but . . . which of Homer's two works Dante's *Divine Comedy* is more like, because one work has a certain character of drama attached to it, and that's the one—

LS: Well, perhaps we [will] come back to this subject, when we have cleared up the . . . of Homer. Will you remind us of that?

Student: . . . Is there an *Odyssey* for Dante? . . . .

LS: Ya, it could be. Because he speaks[24] of himself [more] in the—whereas the remark about himself[25] in the *Divine Comedy* [is] only at the beginning. I do not know. But I suggest that we come back when we have seen what he thinks about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* later. Mr. Lyons?

Mr. Lyons: . . . .

LS: I do not understand your question. He says according to Longinus that the *Iliad* is altogether dramatic and the *Odyssey* is altogether narrative.

Mr. Lyons: . . . .

LS: Well, the *Iliad* would be earlier—the theme of the *Iliad* is earlier than the theme of the *Odyssey*; that's clear. But how this is compatible with the distinction between drama and from a thematic of narrative . . . because if the early statements are true, literally true, in the opinion of the theological poet, they should be narratives rather than dramatic. I do not know, but this is my interpretation. Mr. . . . .

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, but . . . theological poets . . . .

Mr. Reinken: A nineteenth-century thinker who clarifies—Lord Raglan, in his rather interesting *The Hero*, a study of myth and ritual, in which he pushes through this notion that dramatic representation comes first. And before there is anything like an orderly telling, there is an acting out—

LS: A repetition, as it were.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: So ritual—

Mr. Reinken: So that ritual drama is the eldest form . . . . was necessary to solve the difficulty.

LS: Perhaps. But since he could have stated this particular point without—and to some extent, come to think of it he did state it. Do you remember, when he speaks of hieroglyphs? What does he mean? You do not speak about it; you give factual representation of what you mean. And this

could of course be[26] actions [as well] as things. This is true; one could connect that. But still, it's rather thin and I suggest that we first go on. Paragraph 819 in the middle.

Mr. Reinken: "In that human indigence, the peoples, who were almost all body and almost no reflection, must have been all vivid sensation in perceiving particulars, strong imagination in apprehending and magnifying them, sharp wit in referring them to their imaginative genera and robust memory in retaining them. It is true that these faculties appertain to the mind, but they have their roots in the body and draw their strength from it." (819)

LS: Yes, that is what I mean. Now if these faculties of the mind which are so crucial have a bodily basis, then we cannot leave it as a mere science of[27] the minds, as Vico suggested, and we come back again to the proposition I made more than once that the new science must be based on [a] physics and science of the body. Paragraph 821.

Mr. Reinken: "By the very nature of poetry it is impossible for anyone to be at the same time a sublime poet and a sublime metaphysician, for metaphysics abstracts the mind from the senses, and the poetic faculty must submerge the whole mind in the senses; metaphysics soars up to universals, and the poetic faculty must plunge deep into particulars." (821)

LS: Superficially that is a contradiction with what he said on Dante in paragraph 818, but if we put the proper emphasis on "equal" (it is impossible to be an *equally* sublime poet and an *equally* sublime metaphysician), the general thought is of course familiar to us: the age of overpowering imagination and passion is distinguished from the age of the preponderance of reason. This has been said many times.

In 824 to -5, which we can also read—

Mr. Reinken: "For we have seen that Aristotle regarded the Homeric lies as without equal, which is equivalent to Horace's opinion that his characters are inimitable." (824)

LS: You see, inimitable lies [are] the same as inimitable characters. Poetic characters are lies. This doesn't mean fraud, but they are untrue. We have had a passage like this before. And now [the] next paragraph—

Mr. Reinken: "He is celestially sublime in his poetic sentences, which must be expressions of true passions, or in virtue of a burning imagination must make themselves truly felt by us, and they must therefore be individualized in those who feel them. Hence maxims of life, as being general, we defined as sentences of philosophers; and reflections on the passions themselves are the work of false and frigid poets." (825)

LS: Now, again we must take this together with the preceding statement. The marvelous lies are at the same time true, namely, true to the passions, not true cognitively. They express perfectly the experience of the passions. And this is, I think, the solution of the many contradiction[s]—seeming contradictions which we had when he spoke of the truth of these early utterances. They are true in the sense of a true expression of the passions. Not more.

In 829 he draws a conclusion which is very important to what we have read.

Mr. Reinken: "For in their customs the Homeric heroes are like boys in the frivolity of their minds, like women in the vigor of their imaginations and like turbulent youths in the boiling fervor of their wrath, as was also shown above, and therefore it is impossible that a philosopher should have conceived them so naturally and felicitously." (829)

LS: So yes, Homer cannot have been a philosopher, and no poet of the first order can be a philosopher for this reason, because of this identification with the passions which is incompatible with the philosophic nature. In 838 . . . the last of these.

Mr. Reinken:

> But, as recondite wisdom appertains to but few individual men, so we have just seen that the very decorum of the heroic poetic characters, in which consists all the essence of the heroic fables, cannot be achieved today by men most learned in philosophy, in the art of poetry, and in the art of criticism. It is for this decorum that Aristotle and Horace give the palm to Homer, the former saying that his lies are beyond equal and the latter that his characters are inimitable, which comes to the same thing. (838)

LS: In the original it comes out more clearly because at the end of each of these half sentences the key word occurs. Aristotle speaks of Homer's lies. Horace speaks of Homer's characters. The lies are the characters. But what are the characters in plain English, which Homer coined or early poetry created?

Student: The gods.

LS: The gods . . . . The gods are the lies and poetic characters. Now[28] we come to the philological proofs. And here is where you began today. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one question . . . 829. Does this mean that the philosopher cannot recognize—

LS: Oh, he can recognize them, but he cannot identify himself with them.

Mr. Butterworth: He cannot identify them—?

LS: Himself with them. He cannot give an equally powerful expression to them[29] [as] the poet can. Well, you see it is very hard to say when you read Plato what he could or could not have done. And now to what extent does Plato present in a moving manner non-philosophic sentiments? The sentiments of a philosopher—the *Phaedo* is a very moving work, as you know . . . Socrates . . . . But which characters are—if you take, for example, Alcibiades, this vitality incarnate, or whatever you call it, at the end of the *Banquet*.[iv] It is very powerfully presented. But can he move one in the way in which a single word of Socrates can move one? Whether Plato could not have presented a scene between Alcibiades and, say, the King of Persia

[iv] *Symposium* (or *Banquet*) 212d ff.

in the style of a Shakespearean play—I suppose he could, but he never tried. And[30] Vico goes perhaps too far in saying that a philosopher *cannot* do it, but a philosopher *would not* do it.

Mr. Butterworth: But . . . do with the description of the passions.

LS: No, that is something entirely different. That can be done in an extremely dispass[ionate]—read the *Rhetoric*—in a very exact way. But it is surely not meant to incite passion or to make us sympathize with the passions, [but] only to tell us what we have to know about the passions to arouse them on proper occasions in public assemblies, which is not what poetry does. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . . .

LS: Well, that is because he's drunk, he's completely drunk. And this is not the form in which a heroic figure appears in his full heroicity. Secondly, the story he tells about the rebuff he received from Socrates for his desire, his indecent advances, is extremely ridiculous. That is not something which can induce one to admire Alcibiades. The only thing you can admire [in] Alcibiades is[31] [that] in spite of his preoccupations with these big affairs [that] he chose,[32] he still retained his sense for Socrates' extraordinary being. That's the only thing, but we get this sense just by reading;[33] I mean, we don't need Alcibiades for that.

Now take another scene. What is more touching than a loving spouse on the day of the death of her beloved husband? When you read Xanthippe in the *Phaedo*, it's only ridiculous.[v] Socrates says in effect to Phaedo: Throw her out! [Laughter] We have to continue our conversation. That is not a moving figure . . . . Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, in a way, but it is also of course read in the context of the whole thing; it is of course an anti-climax. We must not forget that. I mean, after having heard these terrific speeches about heroes and especially Socrates' own speech, when we have this kind of allegedly authentic commentary on love, and the deeper indication is very clear. People sometimes think that Alcibiades is meant to be *eros* incarnate. That's wrong. I mean, if it is any character there, it is the wholly inconspicuous Aristodemos who accompanies Socrates there and—you know? When he is described . . . are amazingly parallel—of Aristodemos—are amazingly parallel.[vi] No, no. That is one of Plato's tests—not deceptions, but tests whether one falls for that or not. Alcibiades was surely an outstanding individual, there's no question. Extremely gifted. But Plato says: What did he do with his gift? That's . . . .

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[v] *Phaedo* 60a.

[vi] The audio file is not clear, but Strauss may have been suggesting that it is not Alcibiades but Aristodemus who represents the truer likeness to *eros*. See his "*On Plato's Symposium*," ed. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 29.

Well,[34] I do not remember at this moment everything in Plato, of course, but I wonder whether there is there any scene which moves one deeply which is not related to Socrates himself. And the question [of] whether Plato could not have written a tragedy of the Euripidean type: I regard it as perfectly possible, but surely he did not do it. He did not do it.[35] He gave us to some extent the reasons why he didn't do it when he speaks about the drama, you know? To that extent these statements are quite serious, I mean although they are deliberately overdone.

But Vico, at any rate, says that it is physically impossible and I would, by the way, say that the example given by him of Dante (and one could perhaps think of some other examples) would prove that he's wrong, that the highest poetry and the highest thought can go together. [It is] probably very rare that they come together. I cannot imagine very well[36] Aristotle writing a tragedy or a comedy, but in the case of Plato I can.

Student: Jean-Paul Sartre . . . .

LS: I do not know him. Yes, well, this is not the same league as Aristotle. [Laughter] Yes?

Different Student: Vico himself wrote verses, poetry. How does this go with his recondite knowledge that he had of the new science?

LS: I have not read that poetry, but—

Student: It's not bad.

LS: Ya, but they say it is still rather academic stuff.

I think that the common sense of mankind would agree with Vico at this point. Generally speaking, it is surely true. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: Are you going to discuss why these philosophical proofs are philosophical proofs? What is there in them that makes them philosophical as opposed to . . . .

LS: That is a very important question, and I am very sorry that I have not been able to give it any thought. But it should be considered surely. In other words, you have the impression which I also had vaguely when I read it, [that] at some points[37] [philosophical proofs] could have appeared among the philological proofs and visa versa. That is quite true, but it requires a special intensive study.

Mr. Butterworth: I tried to see them under the light of that early . . . philosophy is certainty and philology is authority. Do you remember that?

LS: Ya, sure, I remember.

Mr. Butterworth: . . . .

LS: Ya, but let me—

Mr. Reinken: . . . .

LS: Ya, well, what does this distinction between the true and the certain mean? [LS writes on the blackboard] The true is the rationally evident. The certain is the factually certain. So you know, say, I know that Mr. Reinken is here . . . but I know in this case why he's here, so that's a bad example. Say, I know what this is for, but I don't know how it works. The . . . the why, that's the fact. But what does Vico do with these facts? By looking at them all over the world he discovers the reason. He transforms what was originally merely certain, i.e. certain facts. He sees its inner reason, its necessity. To that extent, at the end of the *New Science* the distinction is abolished: the philological is absorbed into the philosophical. And this would be of course a general explanation of what you said. But whether he has, in addition, tried to draw our attention to this by some funny business in the distribution of the thing, that I do not know. But that's the vague impression which I also had, that this . . . .

Of course you can't leave it at that. You had already an earlier discussion where the philosophical is separated from the philological. I forget where. And you would have to compare it to that. Or am I factually wrong?

Mr. Butterworth: I just don't remember.

LS: Now let me see. I think I found such a distinction somewhere.

Student: The first philosophical proof—

LS: Yes, we cannot settle this in class; we have to really study it.[38] What we are doing here by raising all these kinds of questions is I hope of some use to every one of us, but of special use to Father . . . . Now someone else—Oh, Mr. . . .

Student: Didn't you say that the philosophical would proceed from the philological? I mean he moves around and then he—

LS: No, no, no. He has his philosophic premise. They precede, *cogitate* . . . . that thoughts come first. Sense experience comes afterward. Yes?

Student: Well, up on the board, when you said that he looks around at the certain and then he proceeds from there to the—

LS: Oh no.[39] This suffers from incompleteness. First he has his thoughts about human nature.[40] [These philosophical] axiom[s]. And then he has the mass of wholly undigested and wholly obscure facts. Then he applies the light of these axioms to these facts which have only one quality in the beginning, that of certainty. And then the certainty is transformed into truth by the application of the axioms. That is the procedure. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: In 812 it seems clear that the first philosophical proof is that history is first and then poetry follows. . . . Then he states that the other philosophical proof . . . . If it is the other one,

could it be 814 where he gives the course, the natural course that the fables take from the monstrous to the incredible? . . . .

LS: I do not see why they are manifestly philological.

Mr. Miller: Philosophical.

LS: Philological. Unless we can say number V, for example, this would seem to be—paragraph 815. This I would think would be philological rather than philosophical. But it is surely worth going into and, strictly speaking, it must be gone into.

Student: Well, it sounds like there are only two philosophical proofs.

LS: Where?

Student: . . . and 812 at the end. "Yet this scholar . . . failed—"

LS: No, he speaks of quasi-philosophical. This philosophic proof which is established by the next point. Whether this has a meaning beyond that, along the lines of . . . I cannot say. I do not know. One would have to go into it. But, at any rate, we cannot do that now without being stuck here and never finishing. We have to turn now to the philological proofs.

Mr. Reinken: Weren't the axioms divided into philosophical and philological?

LS: I have a vague recollection; in other words, it was not the first time that the distinction occurred.

Mr. Butterworth: That's paragraph 138.

LS: One would really have to go into that—I am very grateful to [you], Mr. Butterworth, that you brought that up. Now paragraph 839.

Mr. Reinken: "With this great number of philosophical proofs—"

LS: Incidentally, one point occurs to me now, whatever it may be worth. If I am not mistaken, the two references to Jesus Christ—one occurs in the philosophical proofs and one occurs in the philological proofs—they're parallel. Now let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "With this great number of philosophical proofs, resulting in large part from the metaphysical criticism of the founders of the gentile nations—"

LS: You see, that is already a very complicated matter; these philosophic proofs presuppose already a criticism of the authors that is not pure philosophy. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "among whom we must number Homer since certainly we have no more ancient profane writer than he (as Josephus the Jew stoutly maintains), we may conjoin the following philological proofs." (839)

LS: Ya, you see that is interesting; we had an earlier remark in paragraph 788 where he said of Homer simply "the first writer," and quoting Josephus but not adding "the Jew." In other words, I wonder whether here the question of Moses does not come up again and perhaps this could be the difference. That the philologic is that section which is concerned with the problem of the Bible. There is a similar problem—I can only mention [it] for Mr. Butterworth's benefit—in Ibn Khaldun. You have read Mr. Mahdi's book.[vii]

Mr. Butterworth: Yes.

LS: But Ibn Khaldun tries to give an interpretation of Islam on the basis of a kind of Averroistic philosophy. You know, there is also first a philosophy and then the application to the subject. It could be, but I do not know. Yes. Now paragraphs 842 to -43.

Mr. Reinken: "It was the poets who began to write Roman history." (842)

"In the returned barbarian times, the histories were written by the poets who wrote in Latin." (843)

LS: Ya. Now what does this mean? The Romans, in contradistinction to the medieval writers, wrote in their mother tongues. That's clear. Latin was not the mother tongue of these Latin poets. In other words, more simply stated: no schematicism, as we have seen. The simple schemata, you know, that all nations go through the same process, is not sufficient. One must understand the Middle Ages in particular in their peculiarity which has no parallel in the ancient world. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "Manetho, high priest of the Egyptians, interpreted the ancient history of Egypt, written in hieroglyphics, as a sublime natural theology. In the Poetic Wisdom we showed that the Greek philosophers did the same with the early history of Greece recounted in fables." (844)

LS: Ya. In paragraph 361, to which he here tacitly refers, he spoke in the case of Manetho of natural theology, and in the case of the Greek philosophers of philosophy. Now he identifies natural theology with philosophy, which he did not do there. 848.

Mr. Reinken: "And in the second book we showed that the first writers of both ancient and modern nations were poets." (848)

LS: He says now nations, and not gentiles. And he adds the "modern" nations, too. What can this mean? If the first authors of all nations are poets, then the first authors of—historians of the Jews, too, would have to be poets.

[vii] Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

And what about the New Testament, the original work of the modern nations? Modern, of course, never meant in the earlier language "from 1500 on" as it means now. It means here the whole post-classical, the whole post-ancient world. This usage was still quite common in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and surely this . . . . This I believe is the question. 851.

Mr. Reinken: "The rhapsodes went about the cities of Greece singing the books of Homer at the fairs and festivals, one singing one of them, others another." (851)

LS: Ya, I do not know why I referred to that. No, I believe I meant 850; read it please, 850; it is short.

Mr. Reinken: "Homer left none of his poems in writing, according to the firm assertion of Flavius Josephus the Jew against Apion the Greek grammarian—" (850)

LS: Ya, you know,[41] here he speaks again in the language of paragraph 839. But 856 seems to be particularly important; and again terribly difficult, as difficult as the one in which he spoke of . . . . Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "By this reasoning, Hesiod, who left his works in writing, would have to be placed after the Pisistratids, since we have no authority for supposing that he was preserved by the memory of the rhapsodes as Homer was, though the vain diligence of the chronologists has placed him thirty years before Homer." (856)

LS: In other words, a thesis which no one has ever maintained before or after Vico: that Hesiod belongs around 500 or so, yes? The general view is that he is a generation after Homer. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> Like the Homeric rhapsodes, however, were the cyclic poets, who preserved all the fabulous history of Greece from the origins of their gods down to the return of Ulysses to Ithaca. These cyclic poets, so called from *kyklos*, "circle," could have been no other than simple men who would sing the fables to the common people gathered in a circle around them on festive days. The circle is precisely the one alluded to by Horace in his *Art of Poetry* in the phrase "the base and large circle," concerning which Dacier is not at all satisfied with the commentators who assert that Horace here means long episodes—

LS: Ya, here this show of learning and the discussion of Dacier,[viii] a famous French scholar of the time. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And perhaps the reason for his dissatisfaction is this: that it not necessary that an episode in a plot be base simply because it is long." [Laughter]

LS: [Laughing] A profound observation. Yes?

[viii] André Dacier (1651-1722).

Mr. Reinken:

> To cite examples, the episode of the joys of Rinaldo and Armida in the enchanted garden, and that of the conversation of the old shepherd with Erminia, are indeed long but are not therefore base; for the former is ornate and the latter tenuous and delicate, and both are noble. But in this passage, Horace, having advised the tragic poets to take their arguments from the poems of Homer, runs into the difficulty that in that case they would not be poets, since their plots would be those invented by Homer. So Horace answers them that the epic stories of Homer will become tragic plots of their own if they will bear three things in mind. The first is to refrain from making idle paraphrases, in the way we still see men read the *Orlando furioso* or the *innamorato* or some other rhymed romance to the "base and large circles" of idle people on feast days, and, after reciting each stanza, explain it to them in prose with more words. The second is not to be faithful translators. The third and last is not to be servile imitators, but, adhering to the characters that Homer attributes to his heroes, to bring forth from them new sentiments, speeches, and actions in conformity with them; thus on the same subjects they will be new poets in the style of Homer. So, in the same work, Horace speaks of a "cyclical poet" as a trivial marketplace poet. Authors of this sort are ordinarily called *kyklioi* and *enkyklioi*, and their collective work was called *kyklos epikos*, *kyklia epē*, *poiēma enkyklikon*, and sometimes *kyklos* without qualification, as Gerard Langbaine observes in his preface to Dionysius Longinus. (856)

LS: You can see an old scholar stroking his beard by this book. [Laughter] Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "So in this way it may be that Hesiod, who contains all the fables of the gods, is earlier than Homer." (856)

LS: Do you see something in this astonishing paragraph? It ends with a clear contradiction of the beginning, and no connection between the beginning and the end; I mean . . . immediate argument does not support the contradiction in any way. Extraordinary. It is the central paragraph of this particular section, ya, and it is about the center of the central book. Now there is one thing which is very strange: the advice which, according to Vico, Horace gives. The second: *not* to be faithful translators! [LS and students laugh]. An advice which Vico piously followed all the time, even in his own quotations, ya? Very strange. Yes, there is no preparation for the contradiction either. But what can it possibly mean, what can he possibly indicate by this extraordinary sentence? Now I would always start from this: since the subject which he[42] treats in the most gingerly manner is the Bible, let us see how, if we translate this in terms of biblical history, what he can mean: the relation of Homer and Hesiod. Now it is clear that Hesiod's *Theogony* is the work devoted to the gods much more than Homer; Homer tells stories of gods but he doesn't give the story, *the* story of the gods in the way in which Hesiod does it. Could he mean that the biblical theology is the latest part of the Bible, after having stated[43] first the opposite, the heterodox view, the biblical theology—I mean the refined monotheism, refined monotheism comes late—and then at the end returning to the orthodox view, according to which this sublime monotheism was there from the very beginning? Yes, and in between there is a long justification of—long episodes of digressions. Digressions may be noble and not merely tedious

as we would [LS begins to laugh] think, especially in such learned books, at the first glance. The example [of the noble digressions][44] is taken from[45] Ariosto; and there was a mention of Aristo in paragraph 817—oh, that was in this paragraph where he spoke of Dante in 817.[46] I do not know how relevant that is. In the central Book, in the Third Book, on Homer, he has these numbered paragraphs—I mean, not numbered by him. There are exactly 97,[ix] and this Dante thing—[in paragraph] 817—is the seventeenth paragraph of the ninety-seven paragraphs.[x] You know, you count through, in Book 3, the numbered paragraphs; then paragraph 817 is the seventeenth paragraph.[xi] And here this is *numbered* seventeen[xii]—whether there is any coincidence—. So Ariosto is there mentioned, and Ariosto belongs to the illuminated times of the philosophers; [he] uses subjects from medieval romances but of course no longer in the spirit of the medieval romances because he[47] no longer belong[s] to the time of barbarism. Yes,[48] I think if someone can explain paragraphs 817 [and] 856 he can claim to have the key to Vico. I cannot raise that claim.

866: he takes up another great problem there; I have at least a guess. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Dionysius Longinus, being unable to ignore the great diversity in the styles of the two poems, says that Homer composed the *Iliad* in his youth and the *Odyssey* in his old age: a strange detail to be known about a man of whom we do not know the two most important historical facts, namely when and where he lived, regarding which Longinus has left us in the dark in his discussion of the greatest luminary of Greece." (866)

LS: Ya. Now again, if we think of the presence of the biblical problem, what would correspond to the question of the two poems, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*? I think Old Testament and New Testament. Of course this—paragraph eight-hundred eighty—yes. And I just wonder to what extent the discussions of the relation of the Old Testament and the New Testament in Machiavelli and in other writers would not be very helpful here. Mr. . . .

Student: From the preceding paragraph did we conclude that Homer preceded Hesiod or that Hesiod preceded Homer? Or did we conclude—

LS: Who?

Student: Who came first from this—

LS: Well, of course the *Iliad* came first; the *Iliad* belongs much more to the barbaric period.

Mr. Reinken: . . . between Hesiod and Homer.

[ix] In Book 3 Vico assigns Roman numerals to a total of 97 paragraphs in four groups of 10, 28, 33, and 26. As Strauss noted in session 13, Vico himself numbered only the paragraphs with Roman numerals; all others were given Arabic numbers by the editor Nicolini.

[x] Paragraph 817, which mentions Dante and which is marked with the Roman numeral VII, is the seventeenth paragraph in Book 3 to be assigned a Roman numeral.

[xi] Again, it is the seventeenth paragraph in Book 3 to be assigned a Roman numeral, though its Roman numeral is VII, not XVII.

[xii] I.e. paragraph 856 is marked with Roman numeral XVII.

LS: [Laughing] Again, you place your money and you take your choice [general laughter], because he says *both*, he says both. Now[49] if you say [that] what the author says at the end of the long argument must be his final view, then you have to say that Hesiod came before Homer. But[50] he says the opposite at the beginning of the chapter, and the connection between the bulk of the chapter does not in any way justify the conclusion.

Student: . . . gives some indication . . . he thinks Hesiod came first, then the question of whether Homer wrote . . . really would the point, wouldn't it, from the beginning . . . .

LS: Very good. In other words, the third statement in favor of the lateness of Hesiod has some support because Hesiod wrote, and Homer did not write. The later statement has no support. And this I could very well imagine. In other words, the heterodox statement has the support; the orthodox statement has no support. That would make sense.

Student: Earlier, though, when he speaks about Cadmus and the introduction of letters to Greece he also brings up this problem of whether Homer wrote or not; and it's not at all clear that he goes along with the view that Homer did not write. I mean there are problems in that section as well.[51]

Student: 901.

LS: I see. Well, let us wait until we come to that. But you are quite right, Mr. . . ., there [are] very few sections which are not rich in difficulties, and what we would need in each case is a complete collation,[52] surely from the second version, of all statements on that subject. I mean that is the minimum condition because then we still have to apply judgment: What is the value of these different statements? But I will have to think that these paragraphs, 856 and 817; [they] are particularly dark, and I guess that this has to do with the presence of the biblical problem, and also in particular the problem of the relation of Old Testament and New Testament. Yes?

Different Student: At the beginning of 856 he says that the poets preserve all the—

LS: Which paragraph? 800—

Student: 856. He says that . . . .

LS: I see.

Student: . . . That's the only argument I can see for the priority of Hesiod . . . .

LS: I see, because of the primitivity, so to speak, the greater primitivity of—

Student: Of . . . stories. The whole history of the gods.

LS: I see, but at least the matter is older, even if Hesiod's poem is later. That could be, that could be, but surely you must admit it is quite a joke. Nicolini leaves you completely without help in

these matters. I mean he gives you only parallel references on the points which are not interesting, namely, what do such and such—what people in the sixteenth and seventeenth century understood by cyclical poems. This is not very interesting. But this difficulty (I think he does not even notice it), this flagrant contradiction of the beginning and the end of the same chapter, and roughly in the middle of this thing there occurs this central Horatian advice—allegedly Horatian advice—that one must not be [LS begins to laugh] a faithful translator; an advice that . . . Vico himself. Good. In 873, now we come to the discovery of the true Homer.

Mr. Reinken:

> Now all these things reasoned out by us or related by others concerning Homer and his poems, without our having intentionally aimed at any such result—indeed, it had not even entered into our reflections when readers of the first edition of this *New Science* (which was not worked out on the same method as the present), men of acute minds and excelling in scholarship and learning, suspected that the Homer believed in up to now was not real—all these things, I say, now compel us to affirm that the same thing has happened in the case of Homer as in that of the Trojan War, of which the most judicious critics hold that though it marks a famous epoch in history it never in the world took place [laughter]. And certainly if, as in the case of the Trojan War, there did not remain of Homer certain great vestiges in the form of his poems, the great difficulties would lead us to conclude that he was a purely ideal poet who never existed as a particular man in the world of nature.

LS: I.e. a real man is of course always a particular man, ya. But only an ideal man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "But the many great difficulties on the one hand, taken together with the surviving poems on the other, seem to force us to take the middle ground that Homer was an idea or a heroic character of Grecian men insofar as they told their history in song." (873)

LS: Yes. The remark about the earlier edition, of the earlier version of the *New Science* is very interesting. I mean, this is one again which emphasizes [that] this is the final version. The first edition led to the *suspicion* that Homer was not true.[53] Only to the suspicion. But now in the second edition it is shown that this suspicion was correct, namely, Homer was not a true human individual. So the relation would seem to be that the first edition creates suspicions which are spelled out in the second edition. Now of course the [LS laughs] second version brings so many suspicions of its own; I would only draw that the earlier versions must be much more restrained, if I can call this restrained . . . . Now it is very late, and I have a very bad conscience . . . but we have such a backlog that we must do a bit more. I ask you for your forgiveness. Paragraph eight—yes, Mr. Weiss?

Mr. Weiss: . . . .

LS: Of the structure of what?

Mr. Weiss: . . . .

LS: It's the same—I think the same point as regarding Homer: not an individual author but a variety of authors. And what we have [is] the work of late compilers; surely in the case of the Old Testament which had been stated explicitly by people—by Spinoza, Hobbes, and others in the seventeenth century.

Mr. Reinken: He could take, and later in the nineteenth century somebody did take, precisely that approach to the harmonization of the Gospels.

LS: Yes, sure. This began, I believe, already earlier; but as well as Reimarus,[xiii54] a famous man in the eighteenth century. But in the nineteenth century—you mean my namesake, or what? David Freidrich Strauss[xiv]? Or Bauer[xv]?

Mr. Reinken: I'm not sure which one . . . .

LS: Ya, sure; in the nineteenth century—well, as Croce said, it's the nineteenth century, but it is not quite the nineteenth century. Let us read paragraph 879.

Mr. Reinken: "That the reason why the Greek peoples so vied with each other for the honor of being his fatherland, and why almost all claimed him as citizen, is that the Greek—"

LS: No—what do you read? 879?

Mr. Reinken: Oh, I thought you said -5. "Thus Homer composed the *Iliad* in his youth, that is, when Greece was young and consequently seething with sublime passions, such as pride, wrath, and lust for vengeance—"

LS: Now think of the traditional image of the Old Testament: wrath. The wrathful God. Yes? This was already mentioned in an earlier paragraph, in 868. But let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> passions which do not tolerate dissimulation but which love magnanimity; and hence this Greece admired Achilles, the hero of violence. But he wrote the *Odyssey* in his old age, that is, when the spirits of Greece had been somewhat cooled by reflection, which is the mother of prudence, so that it admired Ulysses, the hero of wisdom. Thus in the time of Homer's youth the peoples of Greece found pleasure in coarseness, villainy, ferocity, savagery, and cruelty, while in the

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[xiii] Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), a German philosopher who helped to stimulate critical research into the historical Jesus.

[xiv] David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), a German-Protestant philosopher and theologian, who lost his academic position because he denied the supernatural claims of the New Testament in *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (London: Chapman Brothers, 1946), originally published as *Das Leben Jesu: kritisch bearbeitet* (Stuttgart: P. Balz'sche Buchhandlung, 1836). D. F. Strauss was influenced by Hegel.

[xv] Bruno Bauer (1809-1882), a German philosopher and historian. A student of Hegel, Bauer was a critic of biblical history and argued that Christianity owed as much to Stoicism as to Judaism.

> time of his old age they found delight in the luxury of Alcinous, the joys of Calypso, the pleasures of Circe, the songs of the Sirens, the pastime of the suitors, and the attempts, nay the siege and the assaults on the chastity of Penelope: two sets of customs which, conceived above as existing at the same times, seemed to us incompatible. This difficulty was enough to cause the divine Plato—

LS: Now he calls him suddenly "the divine Plato," which was of course[55] the traditional name for him. But I believe it did not yet occur, at least not to my recollection, in Vico. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "to declare, in order to solve it, that Homer had foreseen by inspiration these nauseating, morbid, and dissolute customs. Yet in this way he merely made of Homer a stupid organizer of Greek civilization, for, however much he may condemn, he nevertheless teaches these corrupt and decadent customs which were to come long after the nations of Greece had been organized, to the end that, by an acceleration of the natural course of human affairs, the Greeks might hasten on toward corruption." (879)

LS: Ya. Now it goes without saying that Plato never made such a remark. Plato never bothered about that. Vico says Plato solves the difficulty concerning the relation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by saying that Homer had foreseen the times of Odysseus, ya?[56] In other words, Plato tries to show that there is one author of the works. I think[57] he intends to assert the fundamental harmony between the two Testaments—the prophecies of the Old Testament pointing to Jesus according to the Christian interpretation. Now what can he mean by the fact that the morality of the New Testament should be inferior to that of the Old? That can of course not be literally true, what he says here of the *Odyssey*. But the old story, which was said by quite a few people—I mean of the anti-biblical writers—[is] that the morality of the New Testament is less political, in that sense softer, than that of the Old Testament. This is a possible interpretation. If I consider that, the whole thing makes more sense than it does otherwise. Then he speaks in paragraph 881—there is a similar Homeric problem, which reminds me of biblical parallels. 881.

Mr. Reinken: "And we show that it was from the northeastern part of Greece that the Homer came who sang of the Trojan War, which took place in his country, and that it was from the southwestern part of Greece that the Homer came who sang of Ulysses, whose Kingdom was in that region." (881)

LS: You have only to consider the location of Nazareth in the north and of the desert in the south to have the biblical parallel to that. 886, he speaks of the different dialects of the two poems; well, the language of Moses was Hebrew as far as we know; and of Jesus, of course Aramaic rather than Hebrew.

Mr. Butterworth: Which paragraph is that?

LS: 886. It's only—

Student: One word.

LS: Yes, it has to do with the dialects, the different dialects. 889 and 890. This is course all part of one sentence beginning in paragraph 882. Now read 889 and -90, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

> and his having made men of gods and gods of men. (889)
>
> These last-mentioned fables Dionysius Longinus does not trust himself to sustain save by the props of philosophical allegories, which amounts to admitting that, as they sounded when sung to the Greeks, they cannot have brought Homer the glory of having been the organizer of Greek civilization. The same difficulty recurs in Homer's case which, above in the Notes to the Chronological Table we raised against Orpheus as the founder of Greek humanity. But the aforesaid properties and particularly the last all appertained to the Greek peoples themselves. (890)

LS: "The last" meaning making gods into men and men into gods. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> For inasmuch as at their founding they were themselves pious, religious, chaste, strong, just, and magnanimous, they made their gods so also, as our natural theogony has demonstrated above; then later, in the long passage of the years, as the fables became obscure and customs decayed, from their own character they judged the gods too to be dissolute, as we have set forth at length in the Poetic Wisdom. This in virtue of the axiom laid down above that men naturally bend obscure or dubious laws to their own passions and utilities. For they feared that the gods would not be agreeable to their desires if they were not like them in customs, as we have already said. (890)

LS: Homer is not guilty of having made men into gods and gods into men. For in the early times, when the Greeks were pious and just, they made the gods just,[58] and hence in quotes "Homer," as an early poet. In later times, when the Greeks became corrupted, they, and hence "quote Homer," i.e. the author of the *Odyssey*, made the gods corrupt. Now[59] in other words, we must make a distinction between the original authors of the Homeric—of the *parts* of the two epic poems—and of the final stage, when they were written down. This was a different stage. I think Vico is not guilty of what Croce and others say, of simply identifying poetry and myth. The mythmaking, the theological poets are much earlier than the poets proper, and[60] Homer means both. There is an ambiguity which he doesn't create. The early mythmakers and the final poet—even if the final poet should be a group of poets, that would of course not in itself affect the issue. One thing again must be clear: the main charge made in paragraph 889, namely, that Homer—that his gods are deified men or vice versa remains intact [61]is not refuted in this paragraph. 891 only repeats what we have seen more than once; read only the first sentence.

Mr. Reinken: "But more than ever to Homer belong by right the two great pre-eminences which are really one: that poetic falsehoods, as Aristotle says, and heroic characters, as Horace says, could be created only by him." (891)

LS: Yes. Identification of poetic lies and heroic characters again. There are other things—well, we cannot possibly read all of these things. Let me see, there seems to be another reference to Hesiod here.

Student: 901.

LS: Pardon? 901. Yes. Let us perhaps start in 897. Read through to 901.

Mr. Reinken: "Wherefore neither philosophies, arts of poetry, nor arts of criticism, which came later, could create a poet who could come anywhere near to rivaling Homer. (897)

And, what is more, his title is assured to the three immortal eulogies that are given him: (898)

first of having been the organizer of Greek polity or civilization; (899)

second, of having been the father of all other poets;" (900)

LS: Ya, now this is very important: *all* other poets, not only of the Greeks but also of the Romans, the medievals, and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> [xvi]and third, of having been the source of all Greek philosophies. None of these eulogies could have been given to the Homer hitherto believed in. Not the first, for, counting from the time of Deucalion and Pyrrha, Homer comes eighteen hundred years after the institution of marriage had laid the first foundations of Greek civil life, as we have shown throughout the Poetic Wisdom. Not the second, for it was certainly before Homer's time that the theological poets flourished, such as Orpheus, Amphion, Linus, Musaeus, and others, among whom the chronologists have placed Hesiod, putting him three hundred years before Homer. And Cicero affirms in his *Brutus*— (901)

LS: No, not three hundred, thirty years.

Mr. Reinken: Oh. Did I say three hundred?[xvii]

LS: Yes, well—[LS and students laugh] In a way it doesn't make a difference. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> And Cicero refers in his *Brutus* that there were other heroic poets before Homer, whom Eusebius mentions by name in his *Preparation for the Gospel*, such as Philammon, Thamyris, Demodocus, Epimenides, Aristaeus, and others. And finally, not the third, for, as we have shown fully and at length in the Poetic Wisdom, the philosophers did not discover their philosophies in the Homeric

[xvi] Beginning of paragraph 901.

[xvii] The Bergin and Fisch translation reads "three hundred years before Homer." However, the Italian version of the text reads "thirty years" (*trent'anni prevenir ad Omero*).

> fables but rather inserted them therein. But it was poetic wisdom itself whose fables provided occasions for the philosophers to meditate their lofty truths, and supplied them also with means for expounding them, as we showed throughout the second book in fulfillment of the promise made at its beginning. (901)

LS: Ya. That is also rather obscure, except the third praise of Homer—which is clear, relatively speaking: that Homer was the fountain of all Greek [62]philosophies, but in the very qualified sense stated at the end. Now he speaks[63] of the author of the *Iliad* only. The argument regarding the first poem—the institution of marriage is only the beginning of Greek civility, i.e.[64] the Cyclopic stage, you know?[65] But Homer is the founder of Greek civility, i.e. of the Greek aristocracy; he is the witness to the Greek aristocracy. The argument regarding the second point is crucial: the poets are not the theological poets—and Hesiod belongs to the poets, I think, from what we have seen in paragraph 856. All poetry proper, [it] is also implied, is of Greek origin or inspiration, Think of Virgil and then of Dante's relation to Virgil: I think that is a fact which he has in mind in the first place. In the sequel he makes clear that only the *Iliad* is a document of the heroic natural right of the Greeks. 905 seems to be very important.

Mr. Reinken: "We have already shown above that there were three ages of poets before Homer. The first is the age of the theological poets, who were themselves heroes and sang true and austere fables; the second, that of the heroic poets, who altered and corrupted the fables; the third, that of Homer, who received them in their altered and corrupted form." (905)

LS: Yes. Well, I think there can be no doubt that the poets proper are radically different from the theological poets and the heroic poets, and Homer gets here very bad press,[66] but we can interpret that somewhat better. The poets proper are not the theological poets, the first poets are the theological poets. The corruption of the theological poets is the beginning of poetry proper. The corruption of the early religion is the basis of poetry proper. Now there follows[67] a fairly long discussion of dramatic and lyrical poetry which we cannot possibly read. I think—let us only read the end of it, although we'll miss quite a bit.[68] Paragraph 912.

Mr. Reinken:

> In this way the satire was composed in heroic verse, as the Latins afterwards preserved it, because the first peoples spoke in heroic verse. Later they spoke in iambic verse, so that tragedy was composed in iambic verses quite naturally, and comedy only by an empty adherence to precedent when the Greek peoples were already speaking in prose. The iambic meter was certainly appropriate to tragedy, for it is a verse born to give vent to anger, and its movement is that of what Horace calls a swift foot, as noted in an axiom. Vulgar tradition says that it was invented by Archilochus to vent his wrath against Lycambes, who had refused to give him his daughter in marriage, and that the bitterness of his verses drove father and daughter to hang themselves in desperation. This must have been a history of the heroic contest over *connubium*, in which the rebellious plebeians must have hanged the nobles along with their daughters. (912)

LS: Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> So was born that monstrosity of poetic art by which the same violent, rapid, and excited verse is made to fit such grand poetry as that of tragedy, considered by Plato even more lofty than the epic, and at the same time such delicate poetry as that of comedy; and the same metric foot, well adapted, as we have said, to express wrath and rage, in which tragedy must break forth so fearfully, is considered equally good as a vehicle for jests, games, and sentimental love affairs, which must make up all the grace and charm of comedy. (913)

LS: Yes. Tragedy belongs together with anger and bitterness. Plato would say "spiritedness"; that's the same phenomenon, I think. Opposed to that is the "delicacy" of comedy; delicacy means here the absence of that *thumos*, of that spiritedness, of that anger and bitterness. The full humanity is akin—the fully developed humane stage after the heroic stage is akin to comedy rather than to tragedy. Paragraph 905 is there of some relevance: this early religion is valuated by Vico in opposite manners in opposite places: [69] on the one hand, [it is] highly praised [as] the foundation of all civilization and, on the other hand, [he emphasizes] the barbarism, the atrocity, the ferocity of this fear-ridden mankind. That's one. Paragraph 934, we might take a look. At the end of 934 he says" "the authors of the New Comedy—"

Mr. Reinken: "the authors of the New Comedy, which came in the most civilized times of Greece—" (934)

LS: Yes, that's all. "The most humane times of Greece": somehow the spiritedness and the savagery which is so important as a background to tragedy—some modern interpreters have spoken of the element of cruelty [that is] required in a sublimated manner for enjoying tragedy, and absent from the more humane quality. This, I believe, is very revealing of what Vico's taste is. Yes, we have to leave it at that and discuss Book 4 next time. It is very late, and should I apologize? If someone feels I should, I'll do it.

[end of session]

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[1] Moved "not."
[2] Deleted "that."
[3] Deleted, "that."
[4] Deleted "but."
[5] Deleted "are."
[6] Deleted "in the *Republic*—."
[7] Deleted "but."
[8] Deleted "leave—."
[9] Deleted "Enlarge him."
[10] Deleted "of human—of."
[11] Deleted "make—they."
[12] Deleted "Here we have—."
[13] Deleted "You see—."
[14] Deleted "the historians—."
[15] Deleted "they do not."
[16] Deleted "The case of Dante is very—."
[17] Deleted "in most—."
[18] Deleted "Dante—."
[19] Deleted "that."

[20] Deleted “the barbaric—.”
[21] Deleted “Yes, that seems like.”
[22] Deleted “According to what—.”
[23] Deleted “That would—It could—.”
[24] Deleted “of the” and moved “more.”
[25] Moved “is.”
[26] Moved “as well.”
[27] Deleted “the mind—.”
[28] Deleted “we turn—.”
[29] Deleted “that.”
[30] Deleted “if.”
[31] Deleted “clear is that he had—.”
[32] Moved “that.”
[33] Changed from: “That’s the only thing—but for this sense we also have already just by reading.”
[34] Deleted “I may not—.”
[35] Deleted “And this was—.”
[36] Deleted “Aristophanes writing—I’m sorry.”
[37] Deleted “it.”
[38] Deleted “I think it is—.”
[39] Deleted “This only—.”
[40] Deleted “This psychological.”
[41] Deleted “again—.”
[42] Deleted “has—.”
[43] Deleted “first—no, stating.”
[44] Deleted “which he takes here.”
[45] Moved “of the noble digressions” and deleted “is taken from.”
[46] Deleted “There is also a strange—I mean.”
[47] Deleted “does.”
[48] Deleted “this is a very stra—.”
[49] Deleted “if you say—.”
[50] Deleted “since.”
[51] Deleted “Different student: [Inaudible] LS: Huh?”
[52] Deleted “from—.”
[53] Deleted “And now—.”
[54] Deleted “was.”
[55] Deleted “was.”
[56] Deleted “As I say—.”
[57] Deleted “he has here in mind to—.”
[58] Deleted “they.”
[59] Deleted “this is—.”
[60] Deleted “Homer is—.”
[61] Deleted “it.”
[62] Deleted “philosophers.”
[63] Deleted “now.”
[64] Deleted “that is.”
[65] Deleted “According to—.”
[66] Deleted “The corruption—.”
[67] Deleted “a long discussion.”
[68] Deleted “but we cannot.”
[69] Changed from: “That will be—oh yes, The corruption of this early religion, as this early religion is valuated by Vico, in opposite manners in opposite places.”

Session 15: November 20, 1963

Leo Strauss: Thank you very much for the paper.[i] There will be a great imbalance at the end of this quarter because I will have to give so many good grades and my reputation as a grader will correspondingly decrease, but I can't help that. I'm very glad.

It was a very clear and sensible paper. I would like to comment only on a few points . . . . One thing . . . especially since it comes from a . . . . You, too, use "data" as if it were singular, or for that matter . . . . "Data are." I mean that our ignorant social scientists use it in the singular, but they have an excuse—but you have not. Good. But this is as you could say just pedantism.

Incidentally, the issue of monarchy[1]. When I read or heard the first part I had the feeling that you had not seen difficulties of having monarchy . . . but later on I thought you did. You provisionally follow this argument; there seems to be no proper monarchy at the peak. But even this view that monarchy is a peak and especially the Roman monarchy—who was the most famous[2] [person to state] this view in Vico's century? You all have heard of him and, I suppose, also read him, the most famous Roman historian of the 18th century.

Student: Gibbon.[ii]

LS: The Age of the Antonines.[iii] And this is of course part—a part, but only a part—of Vico, just as it is a part of Machiavelli, in the *Discourses*. We must not forget that.[3]

Let me see, there were a few more points which I wanted to mention. There is one point where you make a slight—I noted page 3 but I cannot . . . page 4—oh yes, page 5; it is on page 5, top. "Vico doesn't speak of any kind of principle of formal legitimacy for his monarch of either an elective or hereditary sort." Ya, but what is . . . . Exactly that natural royal law—you remember the *lex regia* by which Augustus was said to have acquired this power from the senate. And Vico says, no, this is uninteresting. The interesting law, the interesting royal law, *lex regia*, is the natural one. . . . in such a situation, it is absolutely necessary that one man . . . . Whether it was *x* or *y* is not the point. But that the monarchy . . . . The principle of legitimacy is public utility given . . . .

Student: In the sense that there would be no . . . state, and—

LS: Ya. And anarchy . . . and so on.

Now on the same page you quote paragraph 986. Well, will you remind us of that when we come to it, because there seems to be a difficulty of which I was unaware. It shows us men of the

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, reading at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* 6 vols., 1776 and 1788.

[iii] The Antonine dynasty began with Antoninus Pius (r. 138-61) and continued under Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-69). They represent part of the peak from which Gibbon recounts Rome's decline and fall.

basest condition aspiring today—what we know about our human nature—aspiring first to nobility in the struggle over *connubium*, then to honors in the struggle for the consulship. Oh, I see—no, I misunderstood it. The traditional view shows us men of the basest condition. That's it. That was not very clearly—but it is all right.

Page 7.[4] Yes, I fully agree with that. I think we agree: "For a normative teaching of sorts is implied in the strictly factual teaching." There is no question.

On page 8 you speak again of this subject which we have frequently touched: the relationship between civil equity and natural equity. But the way in which you stated it is somewhat new to me, and maybe I missed something before. First you quote Ulpian's definition,[5] according to which civil equity is of course the judgment of a very wise man. Natural equity on this level, let us say, is that equity of which the multitude is aware, i.e. which does not require training and application. And the question is, then—somehow your statement seems to me very incisive and going beyond what I said before. Shall we do this: that if and when we come to paragraph 951 you will remind me of this, in case I did not?

Now here I have another paper, from Mr. . . . There is only one point which I would like to mention on this paper. He says we could represent these relations of the various triadic phenomena, of which we have also heard today[iv]: we could represent these schematically, like this: natures, customs, natural laws, commonwealths, for the sake of the communication of the above things: languages and characters; for the sake of their justification and sanctioning: jurisprudence, authority, reason and judgment. These are ten. The eleventh triadic unity is the three sects of time, whatever that strange expression may mean. Vico says it in relation to jurisprudence. The three kinds of jurisprudence prevail in three sects of time. The rationale here is that of simultaneity.

In paragraph 975, however, the same situation is made much broader. All the aforesaid institutions have been practiced through three sects of time. Yes, now what was the conclusion that you drew from that? That each—

Student: . . . .

LS: In other words, in a way each is involved in everything. One is involved in everything else.

Student: In the Preface he says that . . . the other. The first four articles are . . . .

LS: I thought that you meant it in a kind of Hegelian way.

Student: Oh, no.

LS: Now let me proceed. Since I have to make it an iron rule to the end of this quarter that I stop at 5:30 sharp—doctor's orders—I will not now read your statement but will read it at home and discuss it next time.

[iv] Eleven of the twelve sections of Book 4 have a triad in their title, such as "Three Kinds of Natures."

And now let us turn immediately to where we left off and try to make good. Am I wrong in assuming—were we about to begin Book 4? Or where were we?

Student: We were at the beginning of Book 4.

LS: I see. Good. You note in the title of "The Course which Nations Take," nations is not *genti*, not necessary—can be universal, i.e. Jews and Christians.

In paragraph 915 (we cannot read that), shortly before the center he speaks of constant uniformity proceeding in all these various and so diverse customs. So Vico of course doesn't deny the immense variety, but he says in spite of them there are certain uniformities. And as we have seen, as was pointed out in today's paper, even these uniformities are not universally valid. We do not find an equivalent of the Roman Empire in Greece, for example, [and] it would be very hard to find a popular democracy in Assyria and other places. And Vico knows that.

Now in paragraph 916, which we might read just to begin somewhere.

Mr. Reinken:

> The first nature, by an illusion of imagination, which is most robust in the weakest at reasoning, was a poetic or creative nature which we may be allowed to call divine, as it ascribed to physical things the being of substances animated by gods, assigning the gods to them according to its idea of each. This nature was that of the theological poets, who were the earliest wise men in all the gentile nations, when all the gentile nations were founded on the belief which each of them had in certain gods of its own.

LS: You see the emphasis: the gentile nations tried here to make it quite clear and to take this minimum of precaution. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Furthermore it was a nature all fierce and cruel; but, through that same error of their imagination, men had a terrible fear of the gods whom they themselves had created."

LS: Not created; *finti* . . . feigned

Mr. Reinken: "From this period there remained two eternal properties: one, that religion is the only means powerful enough to restrain the fierceness of peoples; and the other, that religions prosper when those who preside over them are themselves inwardly reverent." (916)

LS: Ya, the latter [6]is a new statement. A new statement. But if you would read the chapter in the *Leviathan* on religion, chapter 12, you would find this is a major point, and of course made with anticlerical intent. You know[7], if the religion loses its image (as they say today), this is due to the conduct of the . . . . But much more important, it is perfectly . . . to think from this statement that he rejects the simplistic, rationalistic view that religion is based on deception. There was no fraud proper committed but there were deceived deceivers; they themselves acted in good faith. They created the gods in their own savage image. . . . always need religion for restraining the people—i.e., papacy understood in contradistinction to the philosopher. But religion loses its

power when the heads of religion cease to be sincerely religious. The latter is of course true of all religions; I mean, that could happen . . . too. And therefore there is a kind of retroactive effect of this implication . . . . before.

In the next two paragraphs, which are brief, it is made clear that reason, conscience and duty are effective only in the human stage, not in the heroic or the divine stages. And [there is] no reference to the gods there—here in this connection. In paragraph—let us read paragraph 919 to 921.

Mr. Reinken: "The first customs were all tinged with religion and piety, like those of Deucalion and Pyrrha, fresh from the flood." (919)

"The second were choleric and punctilious, like those related of Achilles." (920)

"The third are dutiful, taught by one's own sense of civil duty." (921)

LS: Ya, you see here [that] only in the first case religion and piety are mentioned, ya?, which again raises the question: To what extent is religion needed in the last stage?

923 and -24: I mean the question as to [the] meaning of these various subdivisions (that's the eleven triads) would of course be very interesting. I have no answer, and I mean baseless speculation is of no help, But it would be an interesting question. You see, they are very short, these stages here. . . . And now let us turn to paragraphs 923-24.

Mr. Reinken: "The second was—"

LS: Of course the first was divine right, but the second is heroic.

Mr. Reinken: "heroic law, the law of force, but controlled by religion, which alone can keep force within bounds where there are no human laws or none strong enough to curb it."

LS: You see the great key? I mean, if the human laws are strong enough. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Hence providence ordained that the first peoples, ferocious by nature, should be persuaded by this their religion to acquiesce naturally in force, and that, being as yet incapable of reason, they should measure right by fortune, with a view to which they took counsel by auspicial divination. This law of force is the law of Achilles, who referred every argument to the tip of his spear." (923)

"The third is the human law dictated by fully developed human reason." (924)

LS: Ya. So in other words, the heroic stage is a kind of intermediate stage between the divine and [the] human, and[8] [this] reinforces what was said in the preceding section . . . that for all we know human laws may be sufficient for restraining force. Then he speaks on the governments—there is no distinction made here yet between democracy and monarchy. They are simply late . . . . 929, the languages.

Mr. Reinken: "The first kind of language[v] was a divine mental language by mute religious acts or divine ceremonies, from which there survived in Roman civil law the *actus legitimi* which accompanied all their civil transactions. This language belongs to religions by the eternal property that it concerns them more to be reverenced than to be reasoned, and it was necessary in the earliest times when men did not yet possess articulate speech." (929)

LS: Ya, you see there is a certain—I was very doubtful as to what Vico had in mind about this muteness of early men, to what extent he meant this literally. To some extent I believe he did, but he has of course also something else in mind. Speech, *logos*, is the one thing, and the alternative is simply inability to speak, but also silence. Silence. Mystery. Religion is the fear of mystery.[9] Muteness has, in other words, this dual meaning, at least this dual meaning. Yes? 930.

Mr. Reinken: "The second was by heroic blazonings, with which arms are made to speak; this kind of speech, as we have said above, survived in military discipline." (930)

LS: Ya. Nowhere else, is the implication. Next paragraph?

Mr. Reinken: "The third is by articulate speech, which is used by all nations today." (931)

LS: Ya, by all nations now, not only the gentiles. The question is: Are there no comparative stages of the Jews and Christians corresponding to the heroic and the divine?

Mr. Reinken: In paragraph 929 at the bottom, he specifically refers to the gentile men. I noticed the translation just translates "men."

LS: In which paragraph?

Student: 929.

LS: *Uomini gentili*, yes, perfectly clear; you're absolutely right. And this should be—but not in 930.

Student: No, Mr. Reinken, when he read it just said—

Mr. Reinken: But "gentile" was dropped by the translator and of course Adam was taught the language by—.

LS: Ya. We will come to that. But this is one thing that one has to consider as well. When he says *genti* or *gentili,* gentiles, there is no question. But when he says *nazioni* and does not explicitly exclude the Jews and Christians, it means nations in general.

Student: . . . .

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[v] In the Bergin and Fisch translation: "The first of these."

LS: This term, "eternal property," occurs all the time. I mean, you know the "eternal property" is the property which belongs essentially to the thing. It does not mean that the thing itself exists eternally or is always. So I suggested that we understand "eternal property" in the sense of essential property or necessary property if essential is too strong, or what was your difficulty?

Student: Yes, that explains it. He uses the term several times.

LS: All the time. Well, the background of course is his notion of an eternal ideal history. You have the sequence of the divine, heroic and human in all things: religion, laws, arms, and so on and so on. And each has its essential . . . and this is the eternal history, and every part of it is an eternal property of that particular stage under discussion. Yes, Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: In paragraph 930, where he speaks of the language by which—speaking about arms: Does this go back to the paragraph we read above, where Achilles . . . .

LS: No, this has been mentioned before. But what he adds here, what we didn't say at that time, is that this particular thing remains within military discipline. And this draws our attention to the question: To what extent must characteristics of an earlier stage survive in later stages?[10] And the most exciting sub-question of that, of course, is the status of religion. Religion originates in the divine age. To what extent must it survive in the latter stages? That's the question.

Look at paragraph 928, 932, and 937. This is only here. If you compare it, for example, to 947, you will see this is not quite the same. Here are three species of languages, and so on. And in 927, there were three species of laws—I mean,[11] that he repeats the title of the whole section in the beginning of the section occurs only here. I noted it is one of the many funny things our author does. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: . . . paragraph—which paragraph?

Student: It is section 935.

LS: We [will] come to that, we [will] come to that. Let us come to that. I only wanted to show that these three subsequent sections—the seventh, sixth, and fifth—have this beginning peculiar to them which we find nowhere else in this book.

We have to reflect a bit about these strange things and it [is] a very unpleasant thing because we don't have a solution to them. But we must note these things if we want to have an overall picture of Vico.

I would like to mention one point, by the way. While I was unable to do my regular work, I reread the *Autobiography*, which . . . as it were at the end of the *New Science*, and I agree much more now with Mr. Reinken[12] than I did at the time in that I found quite a few things which are so glaring that I cannot understand how I could have overlooked them. Well, I will take this up in the last meeting. So let us go on now. 933.

Mr. Reinken: "The first[vi] were divine, properly called hieroglyphics, used, as we have shown above, by all nations in their beginnings." (933)

LS: By all nations, not gentiles. So there must also have been such a stage in the Jewish development.

At the end of the next paragraph—well, read the second half of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "These imaginative genera, as the human mind later learned to abstract forms and properties from subjects, passed over into intelligible genera, which prepared the way for the philosophers, from whom the authors of the New Comedy—"

LS: In other words—yes, all right, read on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "which came in the most civilized times of Greece, took the intelligible genera of human customs and portrayed them in their comedies." (934)

LS: Ya, you know this story: concepts . . . . First you have images of general meaning, so Achilles does not mean merely this individual but he means the type of individual. Or Solon, you know that. But concepts—say, not Solon but legislator—they [come] much later. And the New Comedy,[13] which means in effect Plautus and Terence (whom we know from Menander), they are very high because it is post-philosophic poetry,[14] poetry which could use the achievements of philosophy. Very interesting, wholly unromantic. Wholly unromantic and an important correction of the view promoted by Croce and others.

Now we come to the paragraph of . . . . If that's the one you meant; that's the one you meant, 935.

Student: . . . .

LS: 925

Student: . . . .

LS: One six.

Mr. Reinken: The verbs used in five, six, and, seven[vii] are "were," "were," "are."

LS: Yes.

Student: That's true . . . .

LS: But they're heroic too.

[vi] I.e. kinds of characters, as paragraph 932 indicates.
[vii] Mr. Reinken's shorthand refers to 925, 926, and 927.

Student: That's true of . . . .

LS: Very good. And only when he comes to speak of the human does he use the present tense. Yes. In other words, he lives in the human stage: he, Vico himself, which is—we're sure of anyway, but it's good to see—

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya, sure. He knew of the new—what are now called the new nations, sure. They didn't call them new nations at the time [laughter]. And of course, not all new nations—not like Europe. But the Africans, I believe—they would simply have said savages. Or the red Indians . . . . They belonged to a pre-human stage in history. Sure. He has given examples of this: parallels between the North American Indians and the early Romans and Greeks, for example. Ya, sure.

Indeed, but you must not forget that Vico is a man of great common sense, as I gradually came to see; it took me a very long time. And he was of course most concerned with his . . . Europe, you know? Europe, which[15] he regarded surely, I am sorry to say,[16] as the most advanced place in the world. I mean, after all, if[17] Bacon and Newton are such terrific fellows as he thought, and they were undoubtedly European, they were superior, he would have said. Today these things are no longer sayable, but I think in class they may be said [laughter]. We are not here in the United Nations. But which . . . .

Now 935.

Mr. Reinken:

> Finally, there were invented the vulgar characters which went along with the vulgar languages. The latter are composed of words, which are genera, as it were, of the particulars previously employed by the heroic languages; as, to repeat an example cited above, from the heroic phrase "the blood boils in my heart" they made the word "I am angry." In like fashion, of a hundred and twenty thousand hieroglyphic characters (the number still used, for example, by the Chinese) they made a few letters, to which as to genera, they reduced the hundred and twenty thousand words (of which the Chinese vulgar spoken language is composed). This invention certainly is the work of a mind more than human, whence, as we learned above Bernard von Mallinckrodt and Ingewald Eling held it to be a divine invention. It is easy to understand how the common sense of marvel led the nations to believe that men eminent in divinity had invented these letters, as by St. Jerome in the case of the Illyrians, St. Cyril in that of the Slavs, and so on, as Angelo Rocca observes in his *Bibliotheca Vaticana*, where the authors of what we call vulgar letters are depicted along with their alphabets.

LS: You see how much he can quote learned literature. . . . Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "But such an opinion can be convicted of manifest falsity if we pose the simple question: Why did they not teach letters of their own creation? We have raised this difficulty in

the case of Cadmus above, who brought letters from Phoenicia to the Greeks, and the latter afterwards used letters of very different forms from the Phoenicians." (935)

LS:[18] Here is a reference to paragraph 440. The discovery of letters was something more than human. Think of one hundred and twenty thousand letters. Who can invent them?[19] Something more than human, but not divine; rather to be ascribed to divines, to theologians, which of course is not ascribing them to God, with all due respect for the theologians. Yet even this is wrong, for the letters were not invented by the divines in question . . . but only brought by them to the people in question—and these people themselves, not the divines, transformed the letters brought to them into different letters. Is this correct as far as St. Cyril goes, Mr. . . .

Student: Yes.

LS: Yes. You see, that is the only way in which I could make sense of it. It's very strange, this paragraph. In brief, if you follow the argument, the discovery of letters is human. [20]I mean, first, it seems to be greater than human; therefore, it's ascribed to divines. But these divines were not truly the creators of these alphabets, because they brought letters, i.e. they had not invented them. And the letters that became adopted by the Slavs and other nations were the work of these Slavs and other peoples. This is one of the dark paragraphs[21] [that] I believe I could follow.

In the next paragraph he makes again clear the point that basic popular sovereignty survives in absolute monarchy. Absolute monarchies are supported by the people against the powerful. Good. We'll come back to that later.

At the beginning of the next section, the human origin of letters and so on is in fact [of] a popular origin. Let us read perhaps the beginning of 937 and 938.

Mr. Reinken: "Three kinds of jurisprudence or wisdom." (937)

"The first was a divine wisdom, called, as we have seen, mystic theology, which means—"

LS: You see, he himself says mystic. Mystical . . . . But it means originally not what mysticism came to mean in the more advanced age; originally it meant the science of theology. But read on.

Mr. Reinken: "which means the science of divine speech or the understanding of the divine mysteries of divination. This science of auspicial divinity was the vulgar wisdom whose sages were the theological poets, who were the first sages of the gentile world." (938)

LS: We can leave it at that. So[22] these letters have a popular origin, yes, but still there is another problem[23] which does not yet come out here, does it? No, it is only implied, but the implication is this: since religion, for example, clearly in the Roman case was a privilege or monopoly of the patricians, while this more popular wisdom, it[viii] was yet used against the plebs. It was yet used against the plebs. This will become clearer, I think, in the sequel.

[viii] Strauss's "it" seems to refer to a popular or vulgar wisdom that was nevertheless used against the popular class, and 938 identifies this as "the science of auspicial divinity."

900—ya, here, 939 draws our attention to the fact which we know already[24] and which we . . . very much later, that heroic jurisprudence or wisdom—and this of course also in the Middle Ages, the returned barbarism—is naturally barbarism.

And let us then read 940 following.

Mr. Reinken:

> The third is human jusriprudence, which looks to the truth of the facts themselves and benignly bends the rule of law to all the requirements of the equity of the causes. This kind of jurisprudence is observed in the free popular commonwealths and even more under the monarchies, which are both human governments. (940)
>
> Thus divine and heroic jurisprudence laid hold of the certain when the nations were rude, and human jurisprudence looked to the true when they became enlightened. All this in consequence of the definitions of the certain and the true, and of the axioms set forth on the matter in our Elements. (941)

LS: Yes, what does he mean there? The rational jurisprudence or wisdom is at home only under the human governments, but in monarchies more than in democracies. This rational jurisprudence belongs to enlightened nations. No divine jurisprudence or wisdom there. 942.

Mr. Reinken: "There were three kinds of authority. The first is divine, and of this we ask no accounting by providence. The second is heroic, resting entirely on the solemn formulae of the laws. The third is human, based on the trust placed in persons of experience, of singular prudence in practical matters, and of sublime wisdom in intellectual matters." (942)

LS: Ya. Providence is not questioned in the case of divine authority because you cannot question divine authority. In the case of heroic authority, which is justified by reference to solemn laws, you can at least see what the solemn laws say, what the heroic . . . say, provided that you have access to those laws, provided the laws are written or published. In the case of human authority, it is justified by the wisdom—practical and theoretical—of the rulers, not monarchy. Not monarchy, otherwise you couldn't speak—well, of course you could say he speaks now many states, and therefore . . . . But at any rate, the true title to rule, the old story, is wisdom. . . . Even Vico repeats that here. In 943—

Mr. Reinken: "These three kinds of authority employed by jurisprudence in the course which the nations take, correspond to three sorts of authority appertaining to senates, which succeed one another in the aforesaid course." (943)

LS: There is everywhere a senate. Naturally, if wisdom—especially practical wisdom—is required, there must be a body of men representing the collective practical wisdom of the people, and that would be given to older men. Senate is a group of the *senes,* of the old men, that's clear. But there are certain difficulties as . . . the next paragraph. There is of course no senate in the state of nature—well, because there is no . . . but in the aristocratic stage. Let us read this next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The first was the authority of property ownership, in virtue of which those from whom we derive title to property were called *auctores*, and such ownership is itself always called authority in the Law of the Twelve Tables. This authority had its source in divine governments from the time of the family state, in which divine authority must have been vested in the gods, for it was believed, fairly enough, that everything belonged to the gods. Afterward in the heroic aristocracies in which the senates were the seat of sovereignty (as they are in the aristocracies of our own time)—

LS: So in other words, there are still aristocracies in the world. He means Venice and some other places which he mentions. Nuremberg in Germany also. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> authority quite properly was vested in these reigning senates. Hence the heroic senates gave their approval to that which the peoples had previously devised; as Livy puts it, of that, which the people had ordered, the senate then gave authority to. This does not, however, date form the interregnum of Romulus, as history relates, but from the declining period of the aristocracy when citizenship had been extended to the plebs, as explained above. This arrangement, as Livy himself says, frequently threatened to issue in revolt; so that, if the people wanted their proposals confirmed, they had, for example, to nominate for consuls those who were favored by the senate, just as is the case when magistrates are nominated by the people under monarchies. (944)

LS: Beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From the time of the law of Publilius Philo, which declared the Roman people free and absolute sovereign of the empire, as stated above, the authority of the senate was that of guardianship." (945)

LS: You see, in other words, the government was the people, but the people in its wisdom recognized that it needed guidance. And this guidance was advice. Advice, not command, and this advice was given by the senate. A little bit later, when he says, in the middle of that paragraph—

Mr. Reinken: "All this in order that the people, in decreeing the laws, might not, by reason of their weak counsel, do any harm to the commonwealth, and in order that, in decreeing them, they might be regulated by the senate." (945)

LS: In other words, the Roman people were sensible. Next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Finally the commonwealth passed from popular liberty to monarchy, and there ensued the third kind of authority, which is that of credit or reputation for wisdom: and hence the authority of counsel, in respect of which the jurisconsults under the emperors were said to be

auctores. Such also must be the authority of senates under monarchs, who have full and absolute liberty to follow or not to follow the counsel their senates give them." (946)

LS: In other words, where do senates have a greater chance to be heard? Legally, the situation is the same: the sovereign people may reject the counsel of the senate as well as the monarch may. But where are the chances greater, according to this description? I have the feeling that he gives the edge to democracy; and we will come across other passages. In other words, the issue of monarchy and democracy is not yet settled. And I believe that you yourself didn't believe that. Good. 948.

Mr. Reinken:

> The first kind of reason is divine and understood only by God; men know of it only what has been revealed to them. To the Hebrews first and then to the Christians, this has been by internal speech to their minds as the proper expression of a God all mind; but by external speech through the prophets and through Jesus Christ to the Apostles, by whom it was declared to the Church. To the gentiles it has been through the auspices, the oracles, and other corporeal signs regarded as divine messages because they were supposed to come from the gods, whom the gentiles believed to be corporeal. So that in God who is all reason, reason and authority are the same thing; whence in good theology divine authority holds the same place as reason. Here providence is to be admired because, in the earliest times when the men of the gentile world did not understand reason (which must have been the case above all in the family state), it permitted them to fall into the error of following in place of reason the authority of the auspices, and to govern themselves by what they believed to be the divine counsels thereby communicated. This by the eternal property that when men fail to see reason in human affairs, and much more if they see it opposed, they take refuge in the inscrutable counsels hidden in the abyss of divine providence. (948)

LS: . . . end; we will get a clearer utterance at that point. Here I will mention only one thing. The *ratio divina* is effective in both Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and paganism on the other, in different ways; but this is the second and last mention of Jesus Christ. References occur more—but, at any rate, superficially read, this ninth section begins in an orthodox way. Let us read then the sequel of this, the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> The second was reason of state, called by the Romans civil equity, which Ulpian defined for us as not naturally known to all men but only to the few experts in government who are able to discern what is necessary for the preservation of mankind. In this the heroic senates were naturally wise, and above them all the Roman senate was most wise both in the times of aristocratic liberty, when the plebs was not permitted to take part in public affairs, and in the times of popular liberty, so long as the people were guided by the senate in public matters, which is to say down to the time of the Gracchi. (949)

LS: Ya, if this is not a statement in favor of democracy in a writer like Vico, I don't know what it is. Absolute silence about monarchy, because what was the senate under the emperor compared to then?

So I think we get here an inkling of his procedure. In this very brief chapter, consisting [of] two paragraphs, he makes first a statement which is theologically tolerably orthodox. Tolerably. I mean, in this connection he can make a statement which is political, rather unorthodox; and I wonder whether that is not part of the game: that the fully theological and political heterodoxy never come out together. Here there is a very strange thing about his silence about monarchs, about the senate under monarchs. Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Ya. This was a gross overstatement . . . .[25] Here he states, as it were, the Platonic notion without[26] omitting anything. This cannot be . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: At the end of paragraph 948 he implies that references to divine providence mean that you have not yet sufficiently explicated the reason of state. An improved version of the *New Science*, if such were publishable, would *ipso facto* have much less—

LS: Yes. Well, there is a famous statement of Spinoza in the appendix to the First Book of the *Ethics* about the refuge to providence as the *asylum ignorantiae* (the asylum of ignorance, in other words, when you cannot explain something)—which is, by the way—the formula doesn't stem from Spinoza, I think it stems from Cicero somewhere but perhaps it became famous through Spinoza. But I cannot swear that it comes from Cicero; I would have to look it up but I have an inkling that it is a much older thing. Good. Now paragraph 950.

Mr. Reinken: "Here arises the problem which seems very difficult to solve. How is it that the Romans could have been so wise in statecraft in the rude times of Rome, when in their enlightened times Ulpian says that 'today only a few experts in government understand statecraft'? The answer is that, by virtue of the same natural causes which produced the heroism of the first peoples, the ancient Romans, who were the heroes of the world—"

LS: In other words, they were much more than one special case of heroes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "naturally looked to civil equity, which was most scrupulous about the words in which the laws were expressed. By this superstitious observance of their words, they made the laws march straight through all the facts, even where the laws turned out to be severe, harsh, and cruel (in accordance with what we have said above), just as reason of state operates today. Thus—"

LS: And you see reason of state is of course the center of the thing. That is the implication. Reason of state as distinguished from the superstitious respect for the letter of the law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Thus civil equity naturally subordinated everything to that law, queen of all others, conceived by Cicero with a gravity adequate to the matter, 'Let the safety of the people be the supreme law.'" (950)

LS: Yes, the famous formula. Still, it is slightly different from what I said. But this is really the highest law, and that is civil equity. The supreme law is the safety of the people, of the well-being of the people. And this is civil equity proper. And this implies—and I think that this is the point which I didn't get—all kinds of hardships, possibly. You know, in the case of the creation of . . . which can happen.

But this reason of state is distinguished from heroic law because it is not superstitious. It is not enslaved by formulae. This much is clear. But as far as harshness, occasional harshness goes, it can be as harsh as heroic right. Mr. . . .

Student: Earlier . . . you said that civil equity is nothing other than reason of state, that it's equivalent to it.

LS: Yes.

Student: Well, how do you distinguish—

LS: Oh, yes.[27] He is a very nimble and flexible fellow, and therefore we have to be nimble too. If he analyzes reason of state in a . . . Machiavellian sense—do I make myself clear? For example, old property rights, vested interests create problems. You confiscate; I mean you can give token compensations if you are nice. You know this kind of thing. Are you familiar with this kind of thing?

Student: Yes.

LS: . . . In former times this was regarded as absolutely terrible, you know, and not only around 1900, by the damned reactionaries then. Interference with the age old law, age old law and custom was regarded as a very grave matter.

Student: He distinguishes . . . reason of state from natural reason, and I wonder if the distinction between reason of state and civil equity is really very important. I think that the distinction between reason of state and, for instance, natural reason, or the distinction between civil equity and natural equity are rather more important distinctions. They are more or less equivalent.

LS: No, they are surely not equivalent. But this much we know: natural equity is something which you can have for the asking, so to speak.[28] You don't need to have practiced anything to have natural equity. Civil equity is the thing which the true lawyer and judge and senator acquires.[29]

Student: I meant reason of state and civil equity.

LS: Yes, now let us get at that. Now while civil equity is as such explicitly recognized as the highest law in the human state . . . it is in fact effective of course also in the heroic state, but it is not there recognized as reason of state. They say if we take out—do this and this kind of religious ceremony, that this overrides all considerations of utility. They do not know sufficiently that this ceremony in particular is as much created by concern with the common good of that government—the patrician government—as, say, inheritance taxes are with the common good of a radical democracy. You know, to restate it in a formula: the reason of state is always present, is always active, as long as there are civil societies. But it is not necessarily always known to be reason of state. That it is pursued as such is a characteristic of human government. I think that's what it means.

Now whether there are, say, any other complication[s] which you see here that we haven't faced. Is there any other complication?

Student: You were saying that the earlier people didn't realize that it was reason of state, and yet in the very beginning here he says: "How is it that the Romans could have been so wise in statecraft in the rude times of Rome, when . . . 'today only a few experts in government understand statecraft'?" Now, whereas "today" is the time of reason of state and the Roman commonwealth was . . . .

LS: No, I see. I think that there is a certain irony here. The old Romans were so very wise because that kind of wisdom[30] on which they acted did not require[31] [a] high degree of judgment. For example, there are certain notions regarding the just war, the . . . laws and all. Everyone—at least every priest would say that—every patrician, let us say. This didn't require special judgment, but the true politics: Should we wage war, is it expedient to wage war or not? And not: Is it a religious duty to wage war? This is the political question proper, that I think. Heroic wisdom was popular wisdom necessarily. Popular, of course; nevertheless a preserve of that people—you remember the ambiguity of the word people. The people in a heroic commonwealth are of course only the patricians; but every patrician had that wisdom, whereas this wisdom of which Ulpian speaks is a preserve in any regime of a small group.[32] This is not, I think, a great difficulty, but it is good that we discussed it.

What I didn't see in my previous reading is that there will be—the harshness, the harshness of reason of state. This I think comes out more clearly than . . . .

There was here something else. One can say that civil equity is reason of state in the original aristocracies, where there was coincidence between the private interest of the nobles and the common good of the state consisting of the nobles. You remember that we have brought that out more than once. And the question, I believe, which we must gradually face is: Will there be such a coincidence of the private interest of the individuals and the common good in democracy? This I think is a question which we . . . to deal in the sequel. Now paragraph 951 . . . the question of equity.

Mr. Reinken:

> It is quite otherwise in the human times in which free popular states or monarchies develop. In the former the citizens have command of the public

> wealth, which is divided among them in as many minute parts as there are citizens making up the people who have command of it. In the second the subjects are commanded to look after their own private interests and leave the care of the public interest to the sovereign prince. To this we must add the natural causes which produced these forms of state (which are quite opposite to those which produced heroism); namely, as we have shown above, love of ease, tenderness toward children, love of women, and desire for life. By reason of all this men are today naturally led to attend to the smallest details which may bring their private utilities into equality with those of others. This is the *aequum bonum* considered by the third kind of reason to be discussed here, namely natural reason, which is called natural equity by the jurisconsults. This is the only reason of which the multitude are capable, for—

LS: In other words, a crude sense of fairness and right and wrong is universally available . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> when they themselves are involved, they attend to the smallest considerations of the justice which is called for by cases when the facts are reduced to their individual species. And in monarchies there are needed a few men skilled in statecraft to give counsel according to civil equity on public emergencies in the cabinets, and a great many jurists of private jurisprudence to administer justice to the peoples by professing natural equity. (951)

LS: Ya. [33]I think this is the clearest statement regarding civil and natural equity which we have come across hitherto. Do you see that?

Student: . . . right now, but it might clarify more if natural equity is based on the assumption that all men are equal, and civil equity is based on the assumption that all men are unequal.

LS: Oh no, that's a very wrong formulation.

Student: But civil equity, is it not a law of the heroic commonwealth?

LS: I see. It will be actually necessary to indulge the pictorial art. [Laughter] [LS writes on the blackboard] First we have our three ages: divine, heroic, [human]. That's clear. Now civil equity in one sense goes through all three, because everywhere there is a common good—only in this stage, which we can . . . together is the common good,[34] the good of the few. I'll write an F here. And here the common good is the good of all, and . . . that men are equal, roughly . . . because there are no different breeds, you know the one descended from gods, and the other descended from non-gods.

Student: Well, how do you distinguish natural equity from civil equity?

LS: This is—we'll come to that. Civil equity of a sort exists in all three, because in all three there is the necessity of considering the common good or, in other words, to have the reason of

state . . . . In all stages equally there are men of natural equity, i.e. who take in a crude way . . . . I mean, for example, a patrician kills his slave—perfectly all right . . . time to do so; but still, I'm sure the patricians made a distinction whether he[35] kills him as a very obedient and a good slave, or whether he kills him as a rebellious and nasty slave. Do you see that? Now, but one can say this however: that equity in both senses comes into its own only in the human stage, and Aristotelian language on the . . . the equity in these two stages is somehow metaphorical . . . But the concept of equity, or of both natural and civil, is something different from this bi-partition. Different, yes. Does he ever explicitly say that *the* principle of civil equity or natural equity is the equality of all men?

Student: The natural equity is based on the assumption that all men are equal.

LS: Well, then[36] my Aristotelian formula is best: equity proper is . . . equity in the cruder sense exists in all . . . and we define it very simply. Equity in general, in other words in the . . . means reason of state, concern with the well being of the people; but in the two earlier stages the people are the few, whereas in the human stage the people are all.

Student: Well, then, I don't want to drag this out, but I still don't see how you distinguish between natural equity and civil equity in the final stage.

LS: The distinction is an entirely different one: natural equity is untutored; [it is] the equity the reasonable men on the street [have] when [they are] not drunk and not . . . . And civil equity is a trained one—what is the famous definition of[37] Sir Edward Coke of the lawyer and of law?[ix]—The natural isn't cultivated, and so on. Civil equity is cultivated equity on the part of people who have by nature [a] high IQ, because otherwise they couldn't cultivate it, unless it becomes—I mean, you can take off my head in the moment we come across a passage either about the civil natural equity—no, regarding civil natural equity, which I . . . . But hitherto I believe it makes sense, it covers all of the phenomena as far as I know them at the moment. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . Do you see the civil equity being the higher form of equity even in the human stage?

LS: Precisely that . . . .

Mr. Reinken: I would like to pin a great deal on paragraph 951, but briefly, this: the civil equity *par excellence* belongs to the heroic age, the heroic stage, as he indicates at the beginning of 950: [38][these] heroic times are when the state is best suited to defend itself. The Romans are so wise in statecraft—everybody . . . . where Ulpian's statement—only a few experts in government today understand statecraft—is in the nature of a lament . . . . in this human times there is a tension set up between the needs of state, which are for civil equity, for the defense, and the fact that the multitude only understand this natural equity. It is humane, gentle, and desirable, whereas reason of state is harsh and cruel. But [it is] through this tension that the decline from the peak begins,

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[ix] Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) was greatest jurist of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras and the author of *The Institutes of the Lawes of England* (among other works). In the *Institutes* he says several times and in several ways that the law is the perfection of reason or "*Lex est summa ratio*," which may be the maxim of which Strauss is thinking.

and men pass from monarchies to dissoluteness and corruption, and we have the return of barbarism (the axiom for it is the one cited in 260), that states must conform to the nature of the governed, that is, because the people have come to humane, natural equity, which is anti-political, the political—

LS: I see. In other words, the state of disintegration—but that's not democracy proper.

Mr. Reinken: The disintegration is implicit in this chapter.

LS: Yes, but then I can only say[39] that I believe [it] can be stated . . . that all these things are better than the cyclopic stage at the beginning and the stage of most degeneracy at the end, goes without saying. The second thing: if the statement should on the whole prove a bias in favor of the heroic aristocracy . . . we have many statements in high praise of the early, old poetic age, and so on and so on, and you remember, the contradiction—

Mr. Reinken: Oh, precisely here: the heroic is harsh and cruel—

LS: Yes, and you know—

Mr. Reinken: —and . . . is normative.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: Harsh and cruel is bad.

LS: Yes, so in other words—I mean, we would then have another example here, if your interpretation of this paragraph is correct, [40]a big shift in Vico. Well,[41] it's good to have a complete list of all the contradictions—I mean, the main, the major issues. One of them is praise of the divine and the heroic age, and the other is debunking of the divine and the heroic age. And we would have a rather belated—it's [been] a long time[42] [since] we came across such a passage where he boosted, up-rated the divine and heroic age. And I would be at a loss to say why he brings it here; but this is not the only thing . . . at a loss. Mr. . . . ?

Student: Could you say whether, in Vico's mind, this tension between natural equity and . . . . Do you think he feels he can get by without it?

LS: No, civil equity under all conditions. What would be a community [be like] in which there were only men with a simple sense of fairness and would be wholly unable to cope with complicated cases? You need a senate, you need lawyers, and highly trained and decent lawyers—that is, if there is one message here, it is that. I'll tell you why. If there is a difficulty which I have not recognized (which might very well be), it is due to one fact: that the thing by which I was struck here in this section was the tug of war not between aristocracy and the human stage—not between the heroic and human stage, but between democracy and monarchy. And I was very eager to see on which side of the fence he will eventually come down, because the clear . . . statements are all in favor of monarchy, but the indications are in many places very powerful in favor of democracy, and that whether there is a contr[adiction], I would like,

Mr. . . . that . . . . [LS writes on the blackboard] We have the war, or the issue, monarchy/democracy. You are aware of that; both belong to the human stage. And we have the tug of war between the heroic and the human stage; both belong to the human stage. Now this issue, I believe, has been settled a long time ago in spite of some very high praises of the heroic age which occur. The ultimate statement is that . . . the Greek or Roman . . . Middle Ages, as much as anyone has ever . . . . Do you see that? These are two very different issues.

Student: I'm not so sure that in the case of Rome that he has made his decision to come down on the side of . . .

LS: Yes, but we—I'm sorry that I have such a poor memory for paragraph numbers, but we—this issue bothered us a great deal in the earlier part of the seminar, until we came across absolutely clear statements in favor of the human as distinguished from the heroic stage. The cruelty, and the stupidity, the superstition, and all this sort. Here I can only refer . . . is there anyone who can come to my assistance at this point? Remember, we had the three paragraphs?

Student: I do, actually I remember these words being used to describe it; but I'm not sure exactly . . . . On the other hand he described the human age as tender and soft, and incapable of the heroism—

LS: Yes, I know this, but the question is, on the other hand, if you look at the fact which he has in mind, Rome reached greatness of course after . . . that was long after Rome had become a democracy in his sense of the word. It wasn't a modern democracy, that goes without saying. But any rate do you see . . . .

Student: Yes.

LS: But there are many others—not, I mean not many of equal importance; I believe there are probably five or six more of the same magnitude and which one must keep in mind. Why this? If it [is] a true aristocratic, true heroic statement, why [does] it come in here? It's hard to say; perhaps the reason [is] to slip in on this occasion the Machiavellian suggestion: of course there [is] benignity, decency, mildness, in human nature, but don't have extreme expectations—reason of state, too, is tough. And in this connection he could, you know, by playing up the heroism, he would get a somewhat better . . . .

Mr. Reinken: The praise of heroism can only be derived from the necessity of state.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: And—

LS: But this same necessity of state also brings about hardship, and great hardship, in the human stage.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Good. In other words, he is more Machiavellian than Bentham, which I expected all the time.

Student: In the earlier stage the hardness is due to the ignorance of the people. In the human stage the hardness is necessary to combat the anarchism that proceeded from the . . . .

LS: One can even go further and say, quoting a phrase from . . . which he had quoted before, it is due to *res ipse*: to the very things, the state of things.[x] Yes?

Student: . . . and say, oh, it is completely rational in the human stage.

LS: Ya. Ya, sure. And not due to any—for example there are no absurd prohibitions of marriage between one part of the population and the other, you know, which would—and other-regarding property rights, of course. Sure. I think we did . . . .

952—well, it's a long paragraph. All right, begin to read it.

Mr. Reinken:

> What has here been set forth concerning the three kinds of reason may serve as a foundation on which to establish the history of Roman law. For governments must conform to the nature of the governed, as we have laid down above in an axiom, inasmuch as the governments are born of the nature of the governed, as has been shown above by our principles. So too the laws must be administered in conformity with the governments, and on that account must be interpreted according to the form of the governments.

LS: Did you ever hear that, that the laws must follow the government, and not vice versa? Aristotle: the laws are given with a view to the regime and not vice versa. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This seems not to have been done by any of the jurisconsults or interpreters, who have fallen into the same error into which the historians of Roman affairs had previously fallen. The latter tell of laws decreed at various times in the Roman commonwealth but fail to point out the relations which these laws must have had to the forms of government through which that commonwealth passed." (952)

LS: The relations—in Italian *rapporti*; *les rapports*, in French. Does this ring a bell? *Les rapports*—the whole consideration of laws must be the consideration of the laws in their relations to the form of government, the climate, the character of the population—

Mr Reinken: Montesquieu.

LS: Montesquieu. Montesquieu. It's a strange word, *rapporti*.

Mr. Reinken: "Hence the facts emerge so denuded of the proper causes which must naturally have produced them, that Jean Bodin, equally learned as jurist and as statesman, argues that the

[x] Paragraph 584.

things done by the ancient Romans in the period of the liberty which the historians falsely describe as popular—"

LS: I.e., that early Roman state which was of course not popular at all, as we know now because we have heard it a million times. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> were instead the effects of an aristocratic commonwealth, as in the present work we have shown to be the fact. In view of all this, if all the embellishers of Roman law are asked: Why did the old jurisprudence practice such rigors in applying the Law of the Twelve Tables? Why did the middle jurisprudence, by the edicts of the praetors, begin to exercise a benignity of reason while still respecting that law? Why did the new jurisprudence, without even a pretense of regard for that law, adopt the generous profession of natural equity?—then, in order to give an explanation of some kind, they put forward one which is very offensive to Roman generosity, for they say that the rigors, the solemnities, the scruples, the verbal subtleties, and finally the secrecy of the laws themselves were impostures on the part of the nobles in order to keep the laws in their own hands, for the reason that the laws make up a great part of civil power. (952)

LS: So here this is again a defense[43] of the heroic age, of the ancient Roman aristocracy.[44] A defense of their administration of the law against the charge of imposture, that he doesn't agree. And now the positive argument is given in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken: "Yet these practices were so far from being impostures that they were customs born of their very natures, which through such customs produced such states as naturally dictated such practices and no others." (953)

LS: In other words, no question of imposture. *Necessity*: the patricians were not *guilty* of fraud, they had to act the way they acted. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For in the time of the extreme savagery of earliest mankind, when religion was the only means sufficiently powerful to tame it, providence, as we have seen above, ordained that men should live under divine governments and that the laws everywhere reigning should be sacred, which is as much as to say mysterious and hidden from the masses of the peoples."

LS: In other words a sacred law is by definition an *arcano*—a secret, just as the double meaning of "mute"—mute, mystic.

Mr. Reinken: "The laws in the state of the families were so naturally of this sort that they were preserved in mute languages expressed in consecrated solemnities (survived in the *actus legitimi*), which those simple minds held necessary to assure one man of the effective will of another in the exchange of utilities, whereas now, in the natural intelligence of our minds, it is sufficient to assure oneself by the spoken word or even by mere gestures."

LS: Again, in a way these old men were too stupid to deceive. They are too stupid—that requires already a high degree of cleverness. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "then came the human governments of aristocratic civil states, and, naturally continuing to practice the religious customs, they religiously continued to keep the laws mysterious and secret (this secrecy being the soul and life of aristocratic commonwealths), and religion ensured the strict observance of the laws which is the rigor of civil equity by which aristocracies are principally preserved."

LS: "Of"—yes, "of *the* civil equity." One could almost say . . . "of *that* civil equity." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> Afterwards, when the time came for popular commonwealths, which are naturally open, generous, and magnanimous (being commanded by the multitude, whom we have shown to be naturally intent on natural equity), the so-called vulgar languages and letters (of which, as we said above, the multitude are masters) developed at the same pace, and in these they ordered that the laws be written down, and thus what had been secret came naturally to be published). This is the *ius latens* of which Pomponius relates that the Roman plebs would have no more of it and hence insisted that the laws be inscribed on tablets, since vulgar letters had come from the Greeks to Rome, as stated above. This order of civil human things was finally found ready for the monarchic states, in which the monarchs wish the laws administered according to natural equity and consequently in harmony with the understanding of the multitude, and thus make the powerful and the weak equal before the law, which monarchy alone can do. And civil equity, or reason of state, was understood by a few men wise in public reason, and, by virtue of its eternal property, it was preserved secret within cabinets. (953)

LS: Ya. I see now the difficulty of Mr. . . . much better, because there is another complication obviously here regarding natural and civil equity,[45] to which I have not responded. . . . But let me first see what I have jotted down here. He defends the ancient Roman aristocratic administration of law against the charge of imposture. There was no imposture; these things came into being by nature, which of course does not mean that they are good. No way. But they couldn't be different. Democracies are open, generous, and magnanimous; he does not say this of monarchies and their cabinets. Now this suggestion, this praise—high praise of democracy is mitigated by the praise of monarchy here: monarchy alone makes the powerful and the weak equal at law. Now that of course is a question which we would have to consider, whether that[46] was not possible, say, in the Roman Republic in the good times. Of course there is also no reference whatever to religion being necessary in the human stage . . . . But to come now to the question. In the aristocratic commonwealth there was a rigor of civil equity, and the civil equity preserved aristocracy; and in the democracy we have natural equity; and then, what do we have—natural equity, and—but in monarchy he has again civil equity or reason of state. Yes, isn't it? Are these not the—

Student: . . . .

LS: In other words you would say—and then we will see what Mr. Butterworth will say—that there is no place for civil equity in democracy.

Student: Ah, no. And that's in my opinion where Vico sees the advantage of monarchy over democracy, that monarchy . . . . administers those of civil equity.

LS: Ya, but do you not need wise counselors and wise judges in democracies too? And this older definition (I believe it was given in paragraph 320) of civil equity did not have this implication, that this was something which was not possible or necessary in democracies. So I think he is after a number of things here by this particular use. And now this comes out here clearly—this . . . comes out here very clearly: democracy is not secretive; aristocracy is secretive: it doesn't publish the laws. Monarchy is secretive in another manner: it publishes the laws, all right, but it has a cabinet system, and there is no cabinet system—you know, not in the present meaning of the term—in a democracy. But reason of state, i.e. policy, is of course necessary in a democracy as well. What was your problem, Mr. . . . ? And then . . . .

Student: I didn't exactly hear your restatement, but isn't it a problem that monarchs seem to have both natural equity and civil equity; in that one paragraph he speaks of—

LS: You know he says so, doesn't he—?

Student: Yes.

LS: That monarchs wish the law administered according to natural equity. I see now; it's another ambiguity. I believe I can now lay it down. . . . . [LS writes on the blackboard] Natural equity, civil equity. Natural equity can mean untutored sense of right and wrong. Civil equity is a cultivated sense of right and wrong, which . . . . So civil, I mean . . . civil equity can be the same as reason of state. And this requires . . . . Then natural equity and civil equity can be used in a different meaning, and this man who makes . . . .[47] Natural equity can also mean this: equity according to nature, i.e., admitting the equality of all men. Civil equity, in contradistinction from that, would then mean an equity based on the premise of the inequality, that the rulers descend from the gods, and the others descend from . . . . Does that make sense? I believe that this here . . . .

Student: I find it hard to agree with the first natural equity, though. I think that it would perhaps be helpful to recall the distinction he makes between natural and . . . that for himself we can only understand things which man makes—those are the civil things.

LS: Yes.

Student: The natural things are made by God and we cannot understand them, and I think that he means that natural equity finds its origin in the study of natural things, and in the study of natural things the natural equality of men is seen; but according to the study of civil things the natural inequality of man is seen in the origin, the difference between the plebs and the heroes. And I think that this is perhaps what he means by distinguishing between natural and civil equity.

LS: Ya, that may be what he means; it may be. But I would say . . . in itself, that civil equity—well, in traditional terms, I mean—natural and civil law: the natural law is not . . . . The civil law . . . . So I think the old Roman distinction between natural and civil underlying . . . use; but he uses it[48]—the distinction between natural and civil—also in a different meaning which is also . . . . But I am grateful to you . . . . If this should not be sufficient, I hope there will be another opportunity.

Now I must be very brutal. 956 makes clear, if anyone has any doubt, that Vico is not simply a euhemerist. I say this certainly to Mr. Miller, yes? Pardon? 957. [In] 957 he speaks of the biblical and Christian parallels to divine punishment of the pagans, and that all wars of the heroic age were . . . a kind of excommunication, and so on. We cannot read it. Let us read 962—no, 961, what he quotes there from Cuiacio. Yes let us first read what he quotes there from Cujas, the famous . . . .

Mr. Reinken: "[Cujas] in his *De feudis* says: 'Christians made use of this sort of purgation for a long time in both civil and criminal cases, everything being settled by duel.'" (961)

LS: In other words, the duel—he claims [you have] the same thing[49] in early Rome and in early Greece—single combat as a kind of[50] institution, is characteristic of the period, of the pre-human period, where issues of right and wrong are not settled by single combat but by a competent judge . . . . And now,what is here so striking is that this quotation from Cujas—and there[51] various forms of purgation of a fundamentally pagan character are explicitly ascribed to the Christians. More important, paragraph 962.

Mr. Reinken:

> It has not been believed that the first barbarism practiced dueling, because no record of it has come down to us. But it passes our understanding how the Homeric cyclopes, in whom Plato recognizes the earliest family fathers in the state of nature, can have endured being wronged, to say nothing of showing humanity in the matter. Certainly Aristotle, as cited in the axioms, tells us that in the earliest commonwealths, not to speak of the still earlier state of the families, there were no laws to right wrongs and punish offenses suffered by private citizens (as we have just proved was the case of the ancient Roman commonwealth); and therefore Aristotle also tells us, as cited in the same place, that this was the custom of barbarous peoples, for as we noted in that connection, peoples are barbarous in their beginnings because they are not yet chastened by laws. (962)

LS: Ya. We see here, this is perhaps the strongest statement of Vico's agreement with Plato and Aristotle which we find. But[52] Aristotle doesn't speak of duels, of course. Vico seems to understand the duels fundamentally [through] the rule of force; I mean the men superior in force, or of course ability, [win], [and] it has nothing to do whatever with justice or injustice. Yes, let me see; 963. Yes, let us read the beginning of paragraph . . . .

Mr. Reinken:

> However, there are two great vestiges of such duels, one from Greek and one from Roman history, showing that the peoples must have begun their wars (called *duella* by the ancient Latins) with combats between the offended individuals, even if they were kings, waged in the presence of their respective peoples, who wished publicly to defend or avenge their offenses. In this fashion certainly the Trojan War began with the combat of Menelaus and Paris (the former the wronged husband and the latter the seducer of his wife, Helen); and when the duel was indecisive the Greeks and Trojans proceeded to wage war with each other. And we have already noted the same custom among the Latin nations in the war between the Romans and the Albans, which was effectively settled by the combat between the three Horatii and the three Curiatii, one of whom must have abducted Horatia. In such armed judgments right was measured by the fortune of victory. This was a counsel of divine providence, to the end that, among barbarous peoples with little capacity for reason and no understanding of justice, wars might not breed further wars, and that they might thus have some notion of the justice or injustice of men from the favor or disfavor of the gods: even as the gentiles scorned the saintly Job when he had fallen from his royal estate because God was against him. And on the same principle in the returned barbarian times the barbarous custom was to cut off the hand of the loser, however just his cause. (963)

LS: A duel is based on the barbarous notion that misery is the consequence of having displeased God; or, vice versa, prosperity is the consequence of having pleased God. And he quotes here Job . . . . And whether the men who approve Job are gentiles is a dark question, because who are the characters in Job? Are they Jews or are they gentiles? No one knows that. Good. This throws some light on his view of providence. 964, that will be the last.

Mr. Reinken:

> From this sort of custom observed by the peoples in private affairs, there emerged what the moral theologians call the external justice of wars, whereby the nations might rest in the certainty of their dominions. In this fashion the auspices which had founded the monarchical paternal authority of the fathers in the state of the families, and had prepared and preserved for them their aristocratic reigns in the heroic cities, and which, when shared with the plebs, produced the free popular commonwealths (as Roman history openly relates), finally legitimized by the fortune of arms the conquests of the lucky victors. All this can have no other source than the innate concept of providence, which all nations possess—

LS: Universally. Now here there is no exclusion of any of them, yes?

Reader: "and to which they must bow when they see the just afflicted and the wicked prospering, as we have said before in the Idea of the Work." (964)

LS: The innate concept of providence transforms the victor, however criminal, into an *ipso facto* just victor. Now this has great advantages[53] because issues are settled, frontiers are drawn, no recrimination in the future, but—which is a good rule of convenience, but which is of course not

a rule of justice. Think of the . . . you have a simple contemporary example. This concept has not fundamentally changed from the most early antiquity up to the present-day moral theologians. And if you bring this together with the reference to Job in the preceding paragraph, I take him to mean:[54] far from opposing the pagan notion, the Bible in a way continues it. Now there is a strange parallel to that in Maimonides, whom he of course did not know—I say of course because there is not a scratch of evidence. He knew a very learned . . . as I saw from his *Autobiography*. Maimonides mentions this only in passing. [That] the Old Testament promises of agricultural and other prosperity for divine worship, and agricultural adversity for idolatry is interpreted by Maimonides as a concession made to pagan beliefs and, in other words, in order to lead the Jews gradually away from this simple notion of a clear one-to-one relation between prosperity and divine favor, and adversity and divine punishment. But one thing becomes clear here: providence . . . . But this justice and injustice depends entirely on victory or defeat, [which are] not in themselves[55] sufficient criteria of justice . . . . He will take up this question of providence in the sequel—already in the next paragraph—but I must stop here. I'm sorry. And I think we still have time, we have time for two meetings, I believe, and . . . the *Autobiography*, and it wouldn't be a bad idea for those of you who have time to reread it too and see how it looks after . . . .

[end of session]

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[1] Deleted "of monarchy."
[2] Deleted "stater of."
[3] Deleted "**Mr. Reinken**: Would you like your stand further up? **LS**: Oh that's all right. Let me—I tried to pretend that was perfectly normal."
[4] Deleted "That is—."
[5] Deleted "and."
[6] Deleted "is not."
[7] Deleted "the—I mean."
[8] Deleted "makes only—."
[9] Deleted "And here this, to that extent—."
[10] Changed from "And the question—this draws our attention to the fact, to what extent must characteristics of an earlier stage survive in later stages?"
[11] Deleted "this particular— simplest of possible forms."
[12] Deleted "now."
[13] Deleted "i.e. Plautus and—."
[14] Deleted "Philosophy which could—."
[15] Deleted "because."
[16] Deleted "Europe."
[17] Deleted "after all."
[18] Deleted "If I understand this—."
[19] Deleted "But—."
[20] Deleted "you know."
[21] Deleted "where."
[22] Deleted "the human origin—."
[23] Deleted "however here."
[24] Deleted "before."
[25] Deleted "But this is—."
[26] Deleted "any—."
[27] Deleted "This is—."
[28] Deleted "Which you—."
[29] Deleted "Student: I meant reason of state and civil equity. LS: What?"
[30] Deleted "which they—."

[31] Deleted “the.”
[32] Deleted “It’s not—.”
[33] Deleted “Now do you.”
[34] Deleted “is.”
[35] Deleted “does it—.”
[36] Deleted “I am—.”
[37] Deleted “Edward.”
[38] Deleted “this.”
[39] Deleted “that this.”
[40] Deleted “of this—.”
[41] Deleted “we would surely—.”
[42] Deleted “that.”
[43] Deleted “of the ari—.”
[44] Deleted “They admin—.”
[45] Deleted, “of.”
[46] Deleted “is not possible—.”
[47] Deleted “Natural equity, no—.”
[48] Deleted “also.”
[49] Moved “you have.”
[50] Deleted “an.”
[51] Deleted “a kind.”
[52] Deleted “of course.”
[53] Deleted “is.”
[54] Deleted “far from opposing the non-pagan notion—no.”
[55] Deleted “a.”

Session 16: There is no surviving recording of session 16.

Session 17: December 4, 1963

Leo Strauss: But Mr. Emmert is I think addicted to the subject [LS laughs] . . . .

Now this is our last meeting, and we have quite a bit of material which we have to cover because I have also[1] to discuss with you briefly some passages in the *Autobiography* which we have not considered . . . the beginning.

We were in the middle of a chapter, paragraph 1039, and I think we should read this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "The interpreters of Roman law have rested the entire reputation of legal metaphysics on the consideration of the indivisibility of rights in their treatment of the famous subject of divisibles and indivisibles." (1039)

LS: Ya. This refers back to the preceding[2] paragraph where he spoke of this: the indivisible character of rights because rights as rights are not bodily beings . . . . .[3] But in the early stage of mankind, when man was unable to grasp anything but bodily things, you had to have at least symbols: bodily representatives of non-bodily things. But non-bodily things were never understood as non-bodily. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> But they have not considered the other and no less important attitude of eternity. Yet they should have noted it in the following two rules of law. The first establishes that, "when the end of the law ceases, the law ceases." It does not read "the end of the reason," for the *finis* or end of the law is the equal utility of causes, which may fail of realization; but the *ratio*, or reason, of the law is a conformity of the law to the fact, clothed in such and such circumstances, and whenever the fact is so clothed the reason of the law lives and governs it. The other rule establishes that "time is not a mode of constituting or dissolving right." For time cannot give a beginning or put an end to the eternal, and in—[i]

LS: . . . right as right is eternal, meaning: because it is not body, because it is not divisible . . . . corrupted. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

> and in usucapion and prescription time neither produces nor terminates the rights, but is proof that he who held them intended to relinquish them. From the fact that the usufruct, for example, is said to terminate, it does not follow that the right terminates, but only that it is detached from the servitude and becomes free as before. Herefrom spring two very important corollaries. First, that as rights are eternal in the intelligence of them or in their idea, whereas men have their being in time, the rights can come to men only from God. And second, that all the countless various rights that have been, now are, or ever will be in the world, are diverse modifications of the power of the first man, who was the prince of the human race, and of the ownership which he held over the whole earth. (1039)

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[i] In this passage, the quotation marks indicate Latin phrases which are translated apparently by Mr. Reinken. In the text the phrases appear in italics.

LS: Ya. The latter, of course, reminds of a biblical passage about the beginning of the creation of man. So all right stems from God, that's the conclusion, and it derives from the right given to Adam. And this would mean of course the strictly biblical account, on the whole. To state it very simply: legal metaphysics of which is spoken frequently is . . . because . . . divine teaching.

But you see here also other implications. Two rules of law of which he speaks here, and[4] two rules of law which lead then to two most important corollaries. The first is the end as distinguished from the reason. Now what does that mean? Man is created for the sake of men, namely, that he rule over the whole earth. And the second principle concerns eternity, and this is the conclusion that all rights stem from the absolutely eternal being, i.e. from God.[5]

So we have here some suggestion of a legal metaphysics. I wonder whether this term "legal metaphysics" has ever been used by anybody prior to Vico. Let us see what he is driving at with that. The next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> Now, because laws certainly came first and philosophies later, it must have been from observing that the enactment of laws by Athenian citizens involved their coming to agreement in an idea of an equal utility common to all of them severally, that Socrates began to adumbrate intelligible genera or abstract universals by induction; that is, by collecting uniform particulars which go to make up a genus of that in respect of which the particulars are uniform among themselves. (1040)

LS: So philosophy stems directly from legislation, but from the legislation in the Athenian democracy. So I mean the overall thesis suggested here in [10]39 is what he has suggested, of course, all the time. He accepts the biblical revelation and what for some form of . . . theology including moral theology will be the overarching teaching, [6]and philosophy can only occupy a limited place in that sphere.[7] What he says in paragraph 1040 does not formally contradict that. Philosophy comes after the laws and all the laws point to God as legislator, as he says in . . . paragraph. But from which is the peculiar law and legislation[8] within which philosophy emerged under the democratic legislation . . . . Next paragraph:

Mr. Reinken:

> Plato, reflecting that in such public assemblies the minds of particular men, each passionately bent on his private utility, are brought together in a dispassionate idea of common utility (according to the saying that men individually are swayed by their private interests but collectively they seek justice), raised himself to the meditation of the highest intelligible ideas of created minds, ideas which are distinct from these created minds and can reside only in God, and thus he reached the height of conceiving the philosophical hero who commands his passions at will. (1041)

LS: . . . leads to Plato, to Plato's idea that ideas necessarily resided in God.[9] What he says at the beginning of the paragraph seems to anticipate a thought which has since become very famous

after Vico. Does it remind you of someone, what he says at the beginning of this paragraph? The idea free from passion of the common utility which emerges somehow from passionate ideas of one's private good. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: The idea of the general will . . . .

LS: Yes, it is amazingly close, Rousseau's . . . that by virtue of . . . in an assembly of people. Of course, the key point . . . namely, that by virtue of the fact that one has to give one's private passion or desire the form of a law. . . . very simple case: I don't want to pay taxes. That is my private desire . . . proposal: that there ought to be a law that no one has to pay taxes, and then I may come to my senses and see that if no one pays taxes I myself will be hurt most, and then I will abandon my plan. And in other cases . . . otherwise it comes very close. Will divorced from right, the interests of passion. And then you have a purely rational will. But this—in the rational will, too, primary will somehow survives. The common good is each one's private good. Consider paragraph 341, in which he touched on this.

Now let us see the next stage of this development. Because here in this paragraph in this section at the end of Book 4, he deals truly with the relation of the whole new science to philosophy.

Mr. Reinken: "The way was thus prepared for the divine definition which Aristotle later gave us of a good law as a will free of passion,[ii] which is to say the will of the hero. He understood justice as queen of the virtues, seated in the spirit of the hero and commanding all the others. For he had—" (1042)

LS: Ya. Do you see the difference between Aristotle and Plato which he describes? Justice resides in the mind of the hero, ya?, whereas the Platonic idea resides in the mind of god. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> For he had observed legal justice seated in the spirit of the sovereign civil power and dictating prudence in the senate, fortitude in the armies, and temperance at festivals, as well as the two forms of particular justice: distributive justice in the public treasuries and commutative justice for the most part in the forum; the latter employing arithmetic proportion and the former geometric. He must have observed distributive justice in the census which is the basis of the popular commonwealths and which distributes honors and burdens in geometrical proportion according to the patrimonies of the citizens. For previously only arithmetic proportion had been understood; wherefore Astraea, heroic justice, was depicted for us with the scales, and in the Law of the Twelve Tables all the punishments—which philosophers, moral theologians, and professors writing on public law now say must be dispensed by distributive justice in geometric proportion—all the punishments, we read, reduce either to the double if pecuniary and to the like if corporal. And since the law of retaliation was invented by Rhadamanthus, he was made judge in the lower world—

LS: In hell . . . .

[ii] Aristotle, *Politics* Book III, chap. 16, 1287b32.

Mr. Reinken: Hell, "in which punishments are certainly distributed. In Aristotle's *Ethics* retaliation was called Pythagorean justice, invented by the Pythagoras who we have revealed as the founder of a nation in Magna Graecia, whose nobles were called Pythagoreans. This invention would be a disgrace to the Pythagoras who later became a sublime philosopher and mathematician." (1042)

LS: In other words, *iusta* . . . . The historical facts regarding the *Ethics*, Aristotle's discussion, are correct here. Let us see what he says. Aristotle too started from a democratic . . . . He thus was able to see the necessity of both distributive and commutative justice in contradistinction to the ancient law, where the . . . tit for tat. The right obtaining in hell, which is . . . of philosophers.

The democratic background is of some importance here for the whole question of Vico's judgment of democracy and monarchy. Aristotle feels that true justice resides in the mind of the hero, i.e. of the philosophic hero or something like it. You see that he observes here complete silence on Aristotelian theology and metaphysics, whereas he speaks of the Platonic theology to some extent. Now what is the conclusion of all that? Next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "From all the above we conclude that these principles of metaphysics, logic and morals issued from the market place of Athens. From Solon's advice to the Athenians, 'Know thyself' (as set forth above in one of the corollaries of our Poetic Logic), came forth the popular commonwealths, from the popular commonwealth the laws, and from the laws emerged philosophy." (1043)

LS: So there can be no doubt about the democratic origin of philosophy. I mean, if we use the word democracy now . . . popular republic. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And Solon, who had been wise in vulgar wisdom, came to be held wise in esoteric wisdom."

LS: In other words, that was an error. But the true thing was that Solon standing for democracy—democracy was the matrix out of which philosophy grew. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> This may serve as a fragment of the history of philosophy told philosophically, and a last reproof, of the many brought forth in this work, against Polybius who said that if there were philosophers in the world there would be no need of religions. For, if there had not been religions and hence commonwealths, there would have been no philosophers in the world, and if human affairs had not been thus guided by divine providence there would have been no idea of either science or virtue. (1043)

LS: Ya, well, we have already heard this argument regarding Polybius and we have considered it. Yes, I think that we will . . . here . . . .[10]

Regarding his way of writing, I have a note which is of course not sufficient but[11] which you should consider. At the beginning of the next paragraph he uses the expression, "*ritornando al proposito*," returning to the purpose . . . a phrase which occurs also elsewhere: 1020 and 1021. I have mentioned on former occasions the use which Machiavelli makes a single time in the *Discorsi* of the expression. I have discussed this same subject in other places from other . . . . *Altro proposito*: this phrase occurs in paragraph 1021; I have not seen [it] elsewhere. Now at any rate, from a number of—when he says here: "To return to the *proposito*," that means we have left the subject. In other words, what preceded it was a digression. But I think that if you would follow it up you would see that paragraph 1031 to paragraph 1043, i.e. the bulk of this chapter, is a digression. [12]And it is very interesting that this discussion of legal metaphysics which we found here, and the fact that philosophy derives from law, particularly democratic law, belongs to this digression. How to interpret that is an entirely different question.

So let us now turn to the Fifth Book, the last Book. Let us begin with 1047.

Mr. Reinken:

> When, working in superhuman ways, God had revealed and confirmed the truth of the Christian religion by opposing the virtue of the martyrs to the power of Rome, and the teaching of the Fathers, together with the miracles, to the empty wisdom of Greece, and when armed nations were about to arise on every hand destined to combat the true divinity of its Founder, He permitted a new order of humanity to emerge among the nations in order that [the true religion] might be firmly established according to the natural course of human affairs. (1047)

LS: This is a very complicated sentence. And I wonder[13] whether the true—God is not explicitly mentioned in the original—whether a more literal rendering of the passage wouldn't say that Christ should be the true divinity of this "author."[iii] Now this was questioned by the Arians of the time, whether he does not have Christ . . . . The Christian religion was made firm by the martyrs and so on. But the divinity of Christ was to be established firmly by the natural development of the new nations. By the natural development: Does he not say this, that according to the natural course of these same human things the Christian religion should be firmly established. There were . . . at the beginning. But the establishment of the Christian religion was to take place by natural means. The subject of the last book is the recourse, the repetition of what happened after antiquity, i.e. the modern nations, the Christian nations. And therefore the primary subject of the last book, more obviously than of any other, is the Christian religion.

Yes, but[14] [what] did this natural establishment of the Christian religion look like? Now in the next paragraph he speaks—let us read only the last sentence. "The first Christian kings."

Mr. Reinken: "Thus the first Christian kings founded armed religions by which they reestablished in their realms the Catholic Christian religion against the Arians (by whom St. Jerome says almost the whole Christian world was befouled), and against the Saracens and numerous other infidels." (1048)

LS: Now this expression "armed religion," does this remind you of something? Mr. Miller?

[iii] Strauss refers to "*Autore*," in the Italian text, which is rendered "Founder" in the translation.

Mr. Miller: . . . .

LS: I don't believe 15, but surely . . . . .[iv] I think 7 or 8, but yes, so these are armed religions, yes. And here he uses a more cautious phrase: a reestablishment of the Catholic religion, not the original establishment. Yes.

At the beginning of paragraph 1050 it is clear that this recourse of such human civil things is a human history, a human history underlying natural equity in modern times as well as in ancient times. And the miraculous beginning is not denied, but it is somehow not used as an explanation because it can be understood in entirely nature terms. Yes?

Student: In several places he mentions that . . . .

LS: Yes, he[15] speaks of providence all the time. The question is: What does he mean by it? Does he mean anything but a natural process which leads up to something unintended by the actors and superior to anything which the actors intended? That is the question. In other words the question is: Does he mean more by providence than what Adam Smith meant by the "invisible hand?" . . . . That is the question all the time.

In 1055 he speaks again of the savagery of religious wars in the Middle Ages and beyond. Let us read paragraph 1056. . . .

Mr. Reinken: "But the most striking recurrence of human things in this connection was the resumption in these divine times of the first asylums of the ancient world within which, as we learned from Livy, all the first cities were founded."

LS: Remember that asylum which Romulus . . . has no other meaning than that [which] it has in the story. You know, the asylum was these savages—impious—how does he call them? The impious tribes. Impious tribes. Who became then the families of Rome. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For everywhere, violence, rapine, and murder were rampant, because of the extreme ferocity and savagery of these most barbarous centuries."

LS: The most barbarous. He means, of course, the Middle Ages. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Nor, as we said in the Axioms, was there any efficacious way of restraining men who had shaken off all human laws save by the divine laws dictated by religion. Naturally, therefore, men in fear of being oppressed or destroyed betook themselves to the bishops and abbots of those violent centuries, as being comparatively humane in the midst of such barbarism—"

[iv] Mr. Miller presumably mentioned that Machiavelli spoke of "armed prophets," but Strauss corrects his reference to chapter 15 of *The Prince.* The distinction between armed and unarmed prophets occurs in chapter 6.

LS: Yes[16] it is not quite literal, but that is what he means. Literally, "being in such barbarism more gentle." Yes, but that's what he means; sure. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "and put themselves, their families, and their patrimonies under their protection, and were received by them. Such submission and such protection are the principal constitutive elements of fiefs." (1056)

LS: Well, if we knew nothing but that—I mean from Vico or from his general history—what would be the conclusion, in the light of Vico's general thesis before? That in the Middle Ages the only rulers, the patricians, were the hierarchy, the particular hierarchy. And I do not know whether Vico makes use of that. Machiavelli does in a subtle way. Sometimes when Machiavelli speaks of the *padri* one doesn't know—superficially he clearly means the Roman Senate, *patres conscripti*. But it has also the possible connotation, the *padri*, the clergy. And of course Vico knew that there was secular government and that, but he emphasizes this point . . . . Let us go on; we will find some more in the sequel.

Mr. Reinken: "Hence in Germany, which must have been the wildest and most savage of all the nations of Europe, there remained almost more ecclesiastical sovereigns (bishops or abbots) than secular; and, as we have said, in France all sovereign princes assumed the title of counts or dukes and abbots."

LS: Ya. So in other words,[17] there was really no secular government. . . . but he has some statement about . . . dukes who called themselves . . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Thus it came about that such an immense number of cities, towns and castles in Europe were named after saints; for in high or hidden places, in order to hear mass and perform the other offices of piety commanded by our religion—"

LS: "Our" religion. One should see how often he speaks of "our" religion . . . . In Machiavelli I counted them; I forgot now how many I counted. In *The Prince* he never uses the word "our" religion. In the *Discourses* he does it at least once; perhaps it is more, but very rarely. Now I don't remember—but I have not counted in Vico, the question occurred to me only when I came to this passage. Yes?

Student: . . . as opposed to saying—

LS: Christianity or the Christian religion—

Student: . . . .

LS: No, no, the Christian religion would be more neutral. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "little churches were opened, which may be defined as the natural asylums of Christians in those times. Close by they built their dwellings. Hence everywhere the most ancient things we see of this second barbarism are little churches in such places as we have described, for the most part in ruins. A famous example of all this is our own Abbey of San Lorenzo of

Aversa, with which was incorporated the Abbey of San Lorenzo of Capua. This abbey governed, either directly or through abbots or monks dependent upon it, a hundred and ten churches in Campania, Samnium, Apulia, and old Calabria, from the river Volturno to the Gulf of Taranto; and the abbots of San Lorenzo were barons of almost all the aforesaid places." (1056)

LS: Ya. What is suggested then is this: in the Middle Ages you have a return of the old order, strictly speaking. Only now it was the Christian religion, but it was fundamentally the same as you had to have at the beginning of the first barbarism: a religious order. And just as the first rulers, the . . . were at the same time rulers and priests, the same was true of the second barbarism.

Student: I was just curious: at the beginning of 1048, he says: "God brought back the truly divine times." One would think that certainly the Christian times would be the most divine times.

LS: I see . . . you're quite right. In other words, it is exactly the same as what happened in the origin, only now it is a different religion and he does not speak here, at least, of the difference. Let us see 1061, that is also very important.

Mr. Reinken: "Once the power of the barons—"

LS: By the way, the beginning of paragraph 1057 is also the beginning of chapter 2. "To these times followed certain heroic times," the same as you had in the first . . . divine order, heroic order. So feudalism proper, say in the high Middle Ages, is already heroic and no longer of the divine earlier stage. 1061.

Mr. Reinken:

> Once the power of the barons had been dispersed and dissipated among the peoples in the civil wars in which the powerful must depend on the people, and had hence been easily concentrated again in the persons of the monarchical kings, the *obsequium* of the freedmen passed over into what is called *obsequium principis*, in which, according to Tacitus, consists the entire duty of subjects to their monarchies. On the other hand, because of the supposed difference of the two natures, heroic and human, the lords of the fiefs were called barons in the same sense in which, as we found above, they were called heroes by the Greek poets and men (*viri*) by the ancient Latins. A trace of this survives in the Spanish *varon* for a man; the vassals, because of their weakness, being regarded as women in the heroic sense above explained. (1061)

LS: . . . Did you see something very strange here in this story? Father . . . .

Student: The word "supposed difference" between—

LS: Yes. That is very important. It refutes again Mr. . . ., who asserted there was truly a difference of nature between the fathers and the clients and that this was not a natural difference but a believed or supposed difference. There is no question about it.

But something else. Since this is a survey of the whole development in the second going, we had the divine age, we have the heroic age, and which one comes next after the heroic age?

Mr. Reinken: The democratic age.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: There should be a democratic age. It . . . in the civil wars.

LS: But it isn't in there, though. Remember, and I think if you would look at the history of the West in the Middle Ages you could not speak of a democratic age . . . except in some more . . . surely not of the whole. Surely that is immensely important, I think. No democracy, no democracy in the modern development. And maybe Vico believed that it could come in the future, what from his time looked like the future; but it wasn't there. The modern development [was] not in contradistinction to the Assyrian development but to the Greek and Roman development. We know already by now that the schema is not universally actual. You know the schema is: divine, heroic, democratic, monarchical. That is not universally true.[18] He doesn't even attempt to prove that in Assyria or in Egypt there was a democratic age. But in Greece and Rome he can assert it. The modern development does not have—by modern I mean of course the Christian development—does not have such a democratic age. This modern development is not favorable to freedom and equality. That is, I think, an indication of that. In paragraph 1076 there seems to be some confirmation of that. That we cannot—

Student: Mr. Strauss?

LS: Yes?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but, this you have already in the heroic age—you know that age which Aesop, for example—you know Aesop . . . . But it is not yet the establishment of popular rule. Mr. Emmert?

Mr. Emmert: Yes, what does this statement "the supposed difference of the two natures" mean . . . all ages are equally natural . . . .

LS: Yes, well . . . . Heroic can be as natural as truth, in one sense, yes? If the hero arises naturally and the truth also becomes known, then naturally to that extent both are equally natural. Yet since what came out naturally in the one stage was error and what came out in the other stage naturally was truth, the second is higher. . . . Let me make a distinction which is now very popular: genesis and validity. Regarding the genesis they are all equally natural. But if we consider only validity and say that [only] is natural[19] which is true and valid, then of course only the democratic age, or the human age . . . stages, is natural.

Well, I can only say—we don't have time to read all of this. 1076 and 1077 confirm[20] this assertion that the democratic development is not noticeable in the modern times. Paragraph 1063 we might also read.

Mr. Reinken: Wouldn't he have noticed that in northern Italy at the time of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, popular commonwealths, the landed nobility was subdued by the . . . and those who didn't come into the republican system petered out.

LS: Yes, but the question is what he would have thought of it. When he speaks of contemporary Venice, for example—and I think also of Genoa, and surely of Nuremburg in Germany—he calls them aristocracies. He would not regard them as popular liberty, although if we look at it . . . we could of course say . . . are to some extent—had as much popular liberty as quite a few Greek cities. . . . Athens, that is, had popular liberty, and of course Rome also in the later stages, in the later part . . . .[21] Surely he doesn't speak here of the Italian cities or some other cities, as—although[22] we must not forget that the cities were surely subject to the Roman emperor; they are not truly free cities. I mean even those who were . . . the free cities of the empire, were still subject . . . to the emperor of the realm and the empire. This would still be . . . .

Paragraph 1063.

Mr. Reinken: "In this fashion the fiefs came back—"

LS: According to his interpretation, there were fiefs in early antiquity, of course; we have seen that. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "springing from the eternal source assigned to them in the Axioms, where we indicated the benefits which may be hoped for in the nature of civil things, whence with full Latin elegance and propriety the fiefs are called *beneficia* by the learned feudists. Hotman—"

LS: That is also nice Latin elegance: whether it is reasonable—whether they are properly called *beneficia* . . . .

Mr. Reinken:

> Hotman indeed observes, but without making use of the point, that the victors kept for themselves the cultivated fields in conquered lands and left to the unhappy vanquished the untilled fields for their sustenance. Thus the fiefs of the first world, as described in our second Book, returned, taking their new beginning, however (as by their nature we showed they must), from the personal rustic fiefs which we found the clienteles of Romulus at first to have been, and of which we remarked in the axioms that they were scattered all over the ancient world of peoples. These heroic clienteles, in the splendor of Roman popular liberty, passed over into the custom by which the plebeians in their togas betook themselves in the morning to pay court to the great lords, saluted them with the title of ancient heroes—"Hail king!"— accompanied them into the forum, returned home with them in the evening, and were there given their evening meal by the lords, in conformity with the practice which gave the ancient heroes the title of shepherds of the people. (1063)

LS: This raises some doubt whether according to Vico there can ever be unqualified equality and freedom; even in Rome . . . and in the splendor of Roman popular liberty. So that—[23]

Here in this whole sequence, paragraphs 1068 following, we see the beginnings: "There returned," "There returned," "There returned," yes? 1072 . . . . There are altogether how many cases? Not all of the paragraphs begin with this. . . . . Now 1071 at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "And since barbarism with its violence destroys the confidence necessary to commerce—" (1071)

LS: That's all we need. Barbarism and commerce are incompatible. We have already seen the connection between stable popular government and commerce on a former occasion. Let us read [1072].

Mr. Reinken:

> There was a return of mancipations, the vassal placing his hands between the hands of the lord to signify fealty and subjection. The rustic vassals under the census of Servius Tullius, as we noted not far back, were thus the first *mancipes* of the Romans. Along with mancipation there returned the division of things into *res mancipi* and *res nec mancipi*; for feudal estates were *res nec mancipi* for the vassal, who cannot alienate them; but *res mancipi* for the lord, just as the lands of the Roman provinces were *res nec mancipi* for the provincials and *res mancipi* for the Romans. In the act of mancipation there was a return of stipulations in the form of infestucations or investitures, which we showed above to be identical. Along with stipulations— (1072)

LS: And so on. The term [*ritonare*] occurs here five times in this paragraph and this would also have to be considered. Let us turn to paragraph 1074.

Mr. Reinken: "This 'authority' of the second barbarism, which we illuminate in this work as we do innumerable other things by reference to the antiquities of the first barbarism (so much more obscure have we found the times of the second barbarism than those of the first)."

LS: Is this not interesting? Why is the first barbarism not so obscure as the second? And this will take some strange . . . from what follows from the end of this paragraph, after he has quoted Budé; he speaks of custom, meaning this feudal custom. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "This custom has lasted down to my time in our Kingdom of Naples—" (1074)

LS: And so on. In other words, while this second barbarism lacks in certain places heroes of Europe, like the Kingdom of Naples up to Vico's own time, in spite or because of that, the beginnings of the second barbarism are much darker than the beginnings of the first barbarism. How is this to be explained on the basis of what Vico has suggested before?[24] How did Vico discover what happened truly in early antiquity against the fables which have come down? Yes?

Student: Well, in the modern, the second barbarism, there's no true Homer to deduce things from—

LS: . . . .

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, surely, that would also be a question.

Student: Here's also . . . and true religion, and that certainly—

LS: Yes, but who are the men who opened up[25] for Vico to some extent the depths and origins of antiquity?

Student: . . . .

LS: Yes, but who are the most important thinkers for[26] [Vico], who open up . . . antiquity, early antiquity?

Student: There are a lot of . . . .

LS: Yes, but especially Thucydides and Aristotle; you remember we collected at the beginning, partly on the basis of the *Autobiography* but more on the first part of the *New Science*, the men who . . . . Thucydides and Aristotle also play . . . role. And there were no such enquirers of the European antiquity in spite of the . . . sources, there were still[27] no critical historians. This I think is what he means. Yes?

Student: But how about . . . .

LS: Yes, well, these were very learned antiquarians and he could also have quoted, and he does quote, chroniclers. But are they critical? Are they critical? We must never forget the principle of the New Science. Philology, as he calls it, comes in only after the axioms, philosophic axioms. And these antiquarians and scholars, merely learned men, did not approach the matter, the material, on the basis of the axioms. The cooperation of philosophy and philology alone recalls the past according to him, and therefore he selects with an amazing arbitrariness from sources and from these scholars the facts which suit him. And the reason for this seemingly . . . procedure is the truth of the past. This—I mean, in other words, [28]early men, the first men must have lived and thought in this and this manner. And hence all institutions which correspond to this way of thinking can be credited with having been the institutions of the time. Those which presuppose another way of thinking cannot have belonged to the past. That's the way . . . .

Mr. Reinken: I was reminded that at an earlier place he draws attention to the fact that he has discussed in this work the first age and not the second, the first time around and not the second. In the latter half of 1017 he speaks of "this most luminous truth which has been clearly demonstrated throughout this entire work, with particular reference to Roman history." . . . The

"luminous truth" is namely that the plebs of the peoples always and in all nations have changed states from aristocratic to popular, from popular to monarchic.

LS: Yes. That is quite true. Here now . . . I suppose the references to Rome, to Roman law and so on are . . . than the references to any other people, but you must not underestimate however the references to Greece . . . too.

Mr. Reinken: But I wanted to deduce from this a further contribution to the democratic theory of Vico: that his real reason for preferring—he talks about Rome because there he can talk about the influence of the plebs . . . critique of European history—

LS: . . . on the basis of Livy. . . . Now let us turn now to paragraph 1075.

Mr. Reinken: "And here is a very clear occasion for observing in the recurrence of nations a recurrence also of the lot of the later Roman jurisconsults in that of the later barbarian doctors. For just as the former in their times had already lost sight of early Roman law (as we have shown above by a thousand proofs), so the latter in their most recent times lost sight of early feudal law." (1075)

LS: . . . 1079.

Mr. Reinken:

> This was because in the severity of those heroic times, every killing of a citizen (when the cities were composed of heroes only) was considered an act of hostility against the fatherland, which is precisely the meaning of *perduellio*; and every such killing was called a *parricidium*, for the victim was a father, that is, a noble, as in those days Rome was divided into fathers and plebs. For that reason, from the time of Romulus down to that of Tullus Hostilius there was no trial for the slaying of a noble, for the nobles must have been careful not to commit such offenses, having among themselves the practice of dueling. But since in the case of Horatius there was no one who could privately avenge by a duel the slaying of Horatia, a trial was then for the first time ordered by Tullus Hostilius. Killings of plebeians, on the other hand, were either committed by their own lords, against whom no accusation could be brought, or by their others who could indemnify the man's own lord for the loss as if he had been a slave, as is still the custom in Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. But the learned interpreters of Roman law did not see this difficulty because they relied on the vain opinion of the innocence of the golden age, just as the political theorists for the same reason relied on Aristotle's statement that in the ancient commonwealths there were no laws concerning private wrongs and offenses; whence Tacitus, Sallust, and other writers who are otherwise most discerning, when they speak of the origin of the commonwealths and laws, relate that in the primitive state preceding the cities men led lives like so many Adams in the state of innocence. (1079)

LS: Let us stop here. He doesn't mention Adam too often, does he? That has something to do with what he said above. . . . Here when he speaks of the *padre*, we must keep this—of a *padre*,

i.e. of a nobleman—we must keep in mind what he said before about the power of the clergy. And the error of all these interpreters consisted in the belief in a golden age of innocence at the beginning. And of course the Bible, too, tells of such . . . by the mention of Adam. And that[29] is indeed the key consequence of the axioms from which he starts. The beginning was bestiality, not perfect humanity, and Vico's own reinterpretations of the historical data follow from his premises.[30] It follows from that that the mind of man originally was subrational; passionate imagination controlled them, and the nice way of putting it is to say that early men were poets[31]. But we must not deceive ourselves about the very harsh meaning of this kind of poetry. But you see also how Romanticism could then restore the other view, the view opposed by Vico, and then say it sounds very nice. The first language of early men was poetry, and prose came much later, as it were . . . . Yes. [Now read] 1080; it's a short paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "In these parliaments were discussed feudal causes concerning rights or successions or devolutions of fiefs by reason of felony or default of heirs. Such causes, when they had been confirmed many times by such adjudications, formed the customs of feudalism which are the most ancient of all the customs of Europe and which prove to us that the natural law of nations was born of these human customs of the fiefs, as has been fully shown above." (1080)

LS: The oldest European right, heroic right, is *human*, yes? Such *human* customs of fiefs. About what the Christian heritage means . . . . [Paragraph] 1083.

Mr. Reinken: "From all the matters here enumerated, we must conclude that the realms were everywhere aristocratic, we do not say in constitution but in government, as in the cold north that of Poland still is (and as those of Sweden and Denmark were until a century and a half ago). In time, if extraordinary causes do not impede its natural course, Poland will arrive at perfect monarchy." (1083)

LS: Ya. You see again the importance of climate: in the "cold north." These are all northern nations. We have seen references to some prevailing barbarism in Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark, [and] Norway in paragraph 1079. Good.[32] So it is by no means true, as Nicolini says, [that] there is only a single reference or so to climate; we have discussed that. It is by indication—it is of course . . . . But you see here that things[33] changed in Sweden and Denmark 150 years ago. Nicolini denies the fact (and I believe Nicolini more than I do Vico on these matters) but still, what happened 150 years ago in these Scandinavian countries? The Reformation. I mean, for Vico . . . .

So the transition from aristocracy to monarchy is by Vico connected with historical correctness or incorrectness; I do not care now[34] [about] the Reformation. But extraordinary causes may prevent that development. Extraordinary causes, non-natural causes. 1084.

Mr. Reinken: "So true is this that—"

LS: We cannot read that; let us read only the last part.

Mr. Reinken:

> Bodin therefore, and with him all the other political and legal authorities who have written on public law, must recognize this eternal natural royal law by which the free power of a state, just because it is free, must be actualized. Namely, that in proportion as the optimates lose their grip the strength of the people increases until they become free; and in proportion as the free peoples relax their hold the kings gain in strength until they become monarchs. Wherefore, just as the natural law of the philosophers (or moral theologians) is that of reason, so this natural right of nations is that of utility and of force, which, as the jurisconsults say, is observed by the nations "as use requires and human necessities demand." (1084)

LS: Ya. What he says first in this paragraph is how the French monarchy came into being. The implication: without France ever having been in a state of popular liberty. The natural right of the philosophers and moral theologians always is radically different from the natural right of the *genti*,[v] which is not of reason but of utility and force. Now this is not to deny that there is some rationality in the natural right of the nations, of course; but not of purist . . . i.e., what some individuals—the philosophers . . . can actualize in their lives; much cruder . . . the reason of state will be the basis of the natural right of the gentes. Now 1086; at the bottom.

Mr. Reinken: "But finally, with the studies undertaken in the universities of Italy and the teaching of the Roman laws contained in the books of Justinian, laws therein based on the natural right of human nations,—"

LS: "Of human nations." You remember what that means. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "minds already developed and grown more intelligent were dedicated to the cultivation of the jurisprudence of natural equity, which makes the common people and the nobles equal in civil rights, just as they are equal in human nature."

LS: Yes, I think that should clearly be settled by now, that natural equality is a fact, and was always a fact. But it was not always seen and acted upon. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "And just as from the time when Tiberius Coruncanius began to teach the laws publicly in Rome their secrecy began to slip from the hands of the nobles, and the power of the nobles gradually declined, so it happened in the case of the nobles of the realms of Europe, which had been ruled by aristocratic governments before passing into free commonwealths and thence into perfect monarchies." (1086)

LS: So there are some . . . somewhere in Europe . . . the clearest example, I believe, would be Holland, and to some extent they have . . . Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> These last two forms of state, since both involve human governments, readily admit of change from either to the other, but a return from either to an aristocratic state is almost impossible in the nature of civil things. So much so that Dion of Syracuse, although he was a member of the royal family and had driven into exile

[v] Strauss's language follows Vico's Italian text, not the translation.

> a monster of princes, Dionysius the tyrant, and although he was so well favored with civil virtues as to be worthy of the friendship of the divine Plato, was nevertheless barbarously slain when he attempted to restore the aristocratic state. And the Pythagoreans (that is, as above explained, the nobles of Magna Graecia), for the same attempt, were all cut in pieces save for the few who had taken refuge in strongholds and were burned alive by the multitude. For the plebeians, once they know themselves to be of equal nature with the nobles, naturally will not submit to remaining their inferiors in civil rights; and the equality they seek may be found either in free commonwealths or under monarchies. Wherefore, in the present humanity of the nations, the few remaining aristocratic commonwealths must take infinite pains and shrewd and prudent measures to keep the multitude at the same time dutiful and content. (1087)

LS: In reading this passage about . . . . He's on that side, it seems to me. The next paragraph says something about—let's look at the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> Carthage, Capua, and Numantia, the three cities which caused Rome to fear for her empire of the world, failed to accomplish this course of human things. The Carthaginians were prevented by their native African shrewdness, which was further sharpened by their maritime trade; the Capuans by the mild climate and the fertility of this happy Campania; and the Numantians, finally, in the first flower of their heroism were suppressed by the power of Rome under a Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Carthage, assisted by the forces of the world. But the Romans, having none of these obstacles, proceeded with even steps, being ruled by providence through the medium of vulgar wisdom. Through all three forms of civil states, in the natural order which has been demonstrated by so many proofs in this work, they persisted in each until it was naturally succeeded by the next. They retained the aristocracy down to the Publilian and Petelian laws; they preserved popular liberty down to the times of Augustus; and they clung to the monarchy as long as they could humanly withstand the internal and external causes which destroy that form of state.[vi] Today a complete humanity seems to be spread abroad through all nations, for a few great monarchs rule over this world of peoples. If there are still some barbarous peoples surviving, it is because their monarchies have persisted in the vulgar wisdom of imaginative and cruel religions, in some cases with the less balanced nature of their subjects as an added factor. (1088-89)

LS: Ya, in this he makes reference to the climate question again. Yes. So the Romans destroyed (that's the implication of paragraph 1088) the possibility of popular government for many centuries. And this other point which Machiavelli teaches at the beginning of the Second Book of the *Discourses*: there were quite a few free commonwealths in the ancient world; the Romans destroyed it (the possibility) so that Machiavelli, as it were, must open the possibility for it for the future. Now you have here seen another reference to the climate, and right at the beginning of the next paragraph there is also one. Now we have been—yes, but he has presented the Middle

[vi] End of paragraph 1088, beginning of 1089.

Ages as simply barbaric, simply barbaric, without saying a word of what's . . . the Christian teaching. And the first discussion of that comes in paragraph 1091, which we should read now.

Mr. Reinken: "In the mid-temperate zone, however, where the nature of man is better balanced, to begin—"

LS: This is of course old stuff—you know that from Aristotle, and so on; it's not new: that the temperate zone is more conducive to the perfection of man than the extreme zones, polar regions or equatorial regions. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "to begin with the Far East, the Emperor of Japan practices a humanity similar to that of the Romans at the time of the Carthaginian wars. He imitates their ferocity in arms, and, as learned travelers observe, his language has a Latin ring about it."

LS: Yes. Some of . . . of the Jesuits, some of the Jesuits brought the reforms, some of the Jesuits. I read this in Nicolini. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "Yet, through a religion of fierce and terrible imagination with dreadful gods all armed with frightful weapons, he retains much of the heroic nature. For the missionary fathers who have been there report that the greatest difficulty they have encountered in converting the people to Christianity is that the nobles cannot be persuaded that the plebeians have the same human nature as themselves." (1091)

LS: In other words, this seems to imply that Christianity does recognize the equality of all natures, which of course it does. Yes? And therefore the question arises: Why does this not lead to a recognition of the equality in law, in secular law in the Middle Ages? Now let's see the sequel.

Mr. Reinken: "The Emperor of the Chinese, who reigns under a mild religion and cultivates letters, is most humane. The Emperor of the Indies—" (1091)

LS: And so . . . this. So Christianity does teach the equality of all men and is therefore more human, but so is Confucianism. Yes. Now the next paragraph, 1092.

Mr. Reinken: "But in Europe, where the Christian religion is everywhere professed, inculcating an infinitely pure and perfect idea of God and commanding charity to all mankind, there are great monarchies most humane in their customs. It is true that those situated in the cold north, such as Sweden and Denmark until a hundred and fifty years ago—"

LS: You see again this reference. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

> and Poland and even England still today, although they are monarchic in constitution, yet seemed to be governed aristocratically; but if the natural course of human civil things is not impeded in their case by extraordinary causes, they will arrive at perfect monarchies. In this part of the world alone, because it cultivates the sciences, there are furthermore a

> great number of popular commonwealths, which are not found at all in the other three parts. Indeed because of the recurrence of the same public utilities and necessities, there has been a revival of the form of the Aetolian and Achaean leagues. (1092)

LS: Ya, what does he mean by that? "Leagues": where does he find the league? . . . . Yes, you see the hindrance—I mean, the climate is a great negative fact, but the hindrance of the climate can be overcome by the cultivation of the sciences . . . . And the cultivation of the sciences somehow supports the democracies, surely as much as the monarchies, to put it mildly. . . . This is by the way a great theme of Montesquieu, how the power of climate can be counteracted by the cultivation of science and arts, so that it's not a simple . . . in Montesquieu. And this speaks to a very great problem of which he was not aware[35] but of which we are aware: What happens when men become, so to say, the master of nature so that they can live as comfortably in the north pole and in the equator as we can live in . . . and what will be the consequences?[36] Still that's of course in Vico. In the next paragraph he speaks of[37] the federal state as a peak of political development. I think this was discussed, Mr. . . . who read the paper last time? You . . . yes. [38]1094, in the second part, when he speaks of—the second part, yes.

Mr. Reinken: "In virtue of the Christian religion, which teaches truths so—"

LS: We should really read the whole because that's a very powerful statement in favor of Christianity; we must not disregard that. Yes, the whole paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> To come back to our subject, in Europe today there are only five aristocracies: namely, Venice, Genoa, and Lucca in Italy, Ragusa in Dalmatia, and Nuremburg in Germany. Almost all of them have small territories. But Christian Europe is everywhere radiant with such humanity that it abounds in all the good things that make for the happiness of human life, ministering to the comforts of the body as well and to the pleasures of mind and spirit. And all this in virtue of the Christian religion, which teaches truths so sublime that it receives into its service the most learned philosophies of the gentiles and cultivates three languages as its own: Hebrew, the most ancient in the world; Greek, the most delicate; and Latin, the grandest. (1094)

LS: Ya. Now it is interesting that in the very context of this high praise of Christianity the Hebrew language is least highly praised; obviously delicacy and grandeur are higher praise than mere antiquity. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: "Thus, even—"

LS: This we do not need.[39] We turn now to the conclusion of the book, which was shorter, but there are a few passages which we should consider. Let us begin at the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "Let us now conclude this work with Plato, who conceives a fourth kind of commonwealth, in which good honest men would be supreme lords. This would be the true natural aristocracy." (1097)

LS: Yes. In other words, the three, which are the three which Plato did not consider or not speak about: the divine, the heroic, and the human, as described by[40] [Vico]; that's clear. And what he wants to discuss in his conclusion is the relation of his political philosophy to Plato. Yes. Let us read—[41]but this Platonic—let us read that. Let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken: "This commonwealth conceived by Plato was brought into being by providence from the first beginnings of the nations. For it ordained that men of gigantic stature, stronger than the rest, who were to wander on the mountain heights as do the beasts of stronger natures, should, at the first thunderclaps after the universal flood, take refuge in the caves of the mountains, subject themselves to a higher power which they imagined as Jove—" (1097)

LS: Ya, but we know this thought already. What he's trying to do then is to connect Plato's perfect commonwealth with his overall view of the development. Let's turn to the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Here was formed a state so to speak of monastic commonwealths or of solitary sovereigns under the government of a Greatest and Best whom they themselves created for their faith out of the flash of thunderbolts, in which this true light of God shone forth for them: that he governs mankind." (1098)

LS: And so on.[42] So[43] first he has theocracy, and then he has the aristocracy of the polyphemes, and then in paragraph 1099 he speaks of the moral superiority of the patricians to the plebs, yes? As if they were by nature better, naturally better by virtue. And just read the end of paragraph 1099.

Mr. Reinken: "Such was the nature of the Herculean commonwealths, in which the pious, wise, chaste, strong, and magnanimous cast down the proud and defended the weak, which is the mark of excellence in civil governments." (1099)

LS: So in other words, all three stages were perfect: everywhere virtue ruled, only in a different way. Yes? And the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "But finally the family fathers, having become great by the religion and virtue of their ancestors and through the labors of their clients, began to abuse the laws of protection and to govern the clients harshly. When they had thus departed from the natural order, which is that of justice, their clients rose in mutiny against them." (1100)

LS: Ya. And so you see, the order of—the natural order, the order of justice was always observed, although the content differed in the different stages, ya? Also the end of[44] paragraph 1100.

Mr. Reinken: "And among the fathers it caused the most spirited and robust to arise as kings whose duty it should be to lead the others and gird them in orders to resist and overawe the rebellious clients." (1100)

LS: Yes. They were naturally the most worthy by virtue of age. And then the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

> But with the passage of the years and the far greater development of human minds the plebs of the peoples finally became suspicious of the pretensions of such heroism and understood themselves to be of equal human nature with the nobles, and therefore insisted that they too should be taken into the civil orders of the cities. Since in due time the peoples were to become sovereign, providence permitted a long antecedent struggle of plebs with the nobility over piety and religion in the heroic contests for the extension of the auspices by the nobles to the plebeians, with a view to securing thereby the extension of all public and private rights regarded as dependent on the auspices. Thus the very care for piety and attachment to religion brought the people to civil sovereignty. In this respect—

LS: [45] In other words, it was always the same notion, piety, which was underlying the development, and was predominant in each stage. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> In this respect the Roman people went beyond all others in the world, and for that reason it became the master people of the world. In this way, as the natural order merged more and more with the civil orders, the popular commonwealths were born. In these everything had to be reduced to lot or balance, and providence therefore, in order that neither chance nor fate should rule, ordained that the census should be the measure of fitness for office. Thereby the industrious and not the lazy, the frugal and not the prodigal, the provident and not the idle, the magnanimous and not the fainthearted—in a word the rich with some virtue or semblance thereof, and not the poor with their many shameless vices—were considered the best for governing. (1101)

LS: That's quite interesting, isn't it? So the fact of the rule of the rich, although he uses a beautiful expression, the rich . . . virtue but also . . . . And does the formula which he uses remind you of something, you know, from another author known to Vico? Locke: the rational and industrious, and . . . . They[46] are responsible for all the things we have; and this was presented as Locke's doctrine of course to . . . national organization of the . . . . But Locke has something to do with the national organization of the . . . . [Laughter]. Even here we have seen some notes, you know, and Holland was a terrific . . . . Now[47] for some people today probably Britain and Scandinavian states, you know, are a kind of empirical proof of the soundness of the welfare state. In a much greater way, I believe, Holland proved the possibility of freedom[48] [while remaining] sufficiently powerful over against the[49] [strong] military monarchies of Europe, at first Spain and then France, and this we must not underestimate. And then of course it was a commercial republic; [this] was very important. Sir William Petty based his argument on Holland,[vii] you know, and Sir William Petty was a younger friend of Hobbes and in a way the father of the science now called economics. At the time it was called political arithmetic,

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[vii] Sir William Petty (1623-1657) served the governments of Cromwell, James II, and Charles II and also was a secretary of Thomas Hobbes. His chief works include *A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions,* and *Political Arithmetic*.

but . . . . Yes. And let us go on. After we have now the . . . quality of democracy again, let us go on.

Mr. Reinken: "In such commonwealths the entire peoples, who have in common the desire for justice, command laws that are just because they are good for all. Such a law Aristotle divinely defines as will without passions, which would be the will of a hero who has command of his passions. These commonwealths gave birth to philosophy."

LS: Now we have it, I think, one hundred percent . . . if there was any doubt regarding the previous digression which we discussed before. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> By their very form they inspired it to fashion the hero, and for that purpose to interest itself in truth. All this was ordained by providence to the end that, since virtuous actions were no longer prompted by religious sentiments as formerly, philosophy should make the virtues understood in their idea, and by dint of reflection thereon, if men were without virtue they should at least be ashamed of their vices. Only so can peoples prone to ill-doing be ashamed of their vices be held to their duty. And from the philosophies providence permitted eloquence to arise and, from the very form of these popular commonwealths in which good laws are commanded, to become impassioned for justice, and from these ideas of virtue to inflame the peoples to command good laws. (1101)

LS: That is perfectly clear, you see. There are a lot of things which appear from this paragraph, and surely this seems to give the edge to popular liberty rather than to monarchy. Yes?

Mr. Butterworth: When he speaks about eloquence here, does he mean learned?

LS: Yes. You know he himself was professor of rhetoric, not of law, in Naples.

Mr. Butterworth: That means that he's limiting it only to certain social conditions . . . .

LS: That it can be effective, or will be—or is likely to be . . . .

Mr. Butterworth: I'm assuming you could make the opposite argument, that especially flattering rhetoric would be . . . .

LS: Yes, but he speaks here of one which inflames the people for justice, and this courtier rhetoric, this praise for—this good-for-nothing praise would not have this effect. In other words, there is a good rhetoric and a bad rhetoric [LS laughs] as we have—this distinction must be made in one way or the other. Many more things,[50] even in this short paragraph. Let me see, in 1107 he seems to say—1107, towards the end.[51]

Mr. Reinken: "And must we not then say that this is a counsel of superhuman wisdom? For without the force of laws (whose force, according to Dio, as cited in the Axioms, is like that of a tyrant), but making use of the very customs of men (in the practice of which they are as free of

all force as in the expression of their own nature, whence the same Dio said that the customs were like kings in commanding by pleasure), it divinely rules and conducts in [the aforesaid city]." (1107)

LS: Yes, but this is a force which has been suggested before: providence rules through human nature, and[52] therefore through things which pleases them. It's not like a tyrant using force. But this can easily be taken to mean providence rules only by and through human nature, and then there is no independent rule for providence. Paragraph 1108, beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "It is true that men have themselves made this world of nations (and we took this as the first incontestable rule of our Science, since we despaired of finding it from the philosophers and the philologists)." (1108)

LS: Yes. So that is the question we have[53] asked before: on the one hand we can, according to the principle of the New Science—we can only understand what we have made, therefore the world of nations must be entirely man's work. Now in one sense it is surely not true, because man did not intend to do it and therefore it is the work of providence;[54] [and] precisely if this is true the world of nations should not be fully known, not be—and this . . . we have discussed before. Let us read only the last, or one of the last. 1110.

Mr. Reinken: "Let Bayle consider then whether in fact there can be nations in the world without any knowledge of God! And let Polybius weigh the truth of his statement that if the world had philosophers it would have no need of religions. For—"

LS: This has gone through the book. I mean, as opposed—even the index of this edition would show how Vico is—his critical references to Polybius and Bayle have occurred. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: "For religions alone have the power to call the peoples to do virtuous works by the stimulation of the senses, which alone move men to perform them; and the reasoned maxims of the philosophers concerning virtue are of use only when employed by a good eloquence for kindling the senses to do the duties of virtue." (1110)

LS: Ya; do you see something here? We have seen quite a bit in Vico that the philosophic morality is ineffective by itself; but now we have now a supplement.[55]

Mr. Reinken: Rhetoric.

LS: Rhetoric, yes. So [it] ceases to be ineffective as long as it is supplemented by a powerful, by the right kind of rhetoric. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

> There is, however, an essential difference between our Christian religion, which is true, and all the others, which are false. In our religion, divine grace causes virtuous action for the sake of an eternal and infinite good. This good cannot fall under the senses, and it is consequently the mind that, for its sake, moves the senses to virtuous actions. The false religions, on the contrary, have proposed to

> themselves finite and transitory goods, in this life as in the other (where they expect a beatitude of sensual pleasures), and hence the senses must drive the mind to do virtuous works. (1117)

LS: Ya. But [56]what this means has to be considered in the light of the whole, and we cannot settle this on the basis of this individual passage. If I am not mistaken, he comes to speak of rhetoric only at the end[57] of the work; at least he never spoke emphatically of it. It's rather . . . . So let's see; I get something of the . . . . I hope you have the *Autobiography* with you.[58] Pardon?

LS: Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: Just one quick question . . . with the saying that he was going to conclude with Plato. But somewhere in the midst it seems that Plato's dropped by the wayside, and it wasn't clear to me where he was dropped by the wayside or what that meant.

LS: Yes, well, I mean what he seems to say is this: that I say exactly what Plato says; Plato spoke of the rule of the best and most virtuous and I show that the best and the virtuous always rule.[59] But of course it is quite clear that what Plato meant and what Vico meant are two very different things, and he has left no doubt about the difference. But he concludes on a irenic note.

Mr. Butterworth: . . . as soon as he's used Plato as much as he can, then he brings us back to hammer home the idea of divine providence—

LS:[60] I believe one can say that there is not a single significant statement of Vico which he doesn't contradict somewhere—

Mr. Butterworth: Which he doesn't?

LS: Contradict somewhere . . . .

Now I remind you again of Mr. Reinken's early statement which was much more advanced than my understanding at that time. But that's not the only occasion. I remember that years ago, when I gave a seminar on Thucydides one of the students—Mr. Gormley, you know him—was the first who saw that Thucydides has a much higher respect for Alcibides' capabilities than I had seen and that is generally admitted in the literature. And another case last year in a seminar on Thucydides I was in—when Mr. Morrison put . . . you remember? And then he, in other words, he also saw something much earlier than I did. And I wanted to use this opportunity to thank you and all my students present and past for what I have learned, although we still have to go through these other examples. And there was some other striking case where I remember, but it doesn't occur to me at the moment. Now let us first turn to page 141 at the bottom and 142 top[viii]. Just read, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken: "In his issue to—"

[viii] In the *Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1944).

LS: No, at the bottom. 141.

Mr. Reinken: 141, ah.

> The third oration, delivered in the year 1701 is a kind of practical appendix to the two preceding ones. Its argument is: "That the society of letters must be rid of every deceit, if you would study to be adorned with true not feigned, solid, not empty erudition." It points out that in the Republic of Letters one must live justly; it condemns the willful critics who wrongly exact tribute from this public treasury of letters; the stubborn sectarians who keep it from growing, and the imposters that counterfeit their contributions to it. (*Autobiography*, 141-42)

LS: You know, when you read this in connection with the preceding two speeches, the context of which is described on page 140-41, you would draw this conclusion as a much more obvious conclusion: namely, that there must be freedom if the sciences are to prosper, rather than absence of deceit, on which[61] he puts the emphasis [here]. Now what was—147, paragraph 2, beginning.

Mr. Reinken: "When this dissertation was published, with the addition of what could not be said in the presence of the Cardinal Viceroy without misusing the time which is so precious to him—" [Laughter]

LS: I think he thought that—I mean, that's a nice way of explaining why it could not be said in the presence of Cardinal Viceroy. 155, where he speaks about Grotius, yes?—and speaks very highly of him.

Mr. Reinken:

> And Vico had occasion to penetrate much more deeply into this work of Grotius when he was asked to write some notes for a new edition of it. He set out to write them less in correction of Grotius than of Gronovius's notes on him, which had been added more to please free government than to give justice its due. Vico had covered the first book and half of the second when he abandoned the task, reflecting that it was not fitting for a man of Catholic faith to adorn with notes the work of a heretical author.
>
> Prepared by all these studies and the knowledge he had acquired, and by these four authors whom he admired above all others, and desired to turn to the use of the Catholic religion— (*Autobiography*, 155)

LS: And so on. Now who are these four authors? These are Plato—

Mr. Reinken: Tacitus.

LS: Bacon—

Mr. Reinken: And Grotius.

LS: No, no; Grotius is a Catholic author.[ix] And that is extremely—you know that he regarded that it is not fitting of a man of Catholic faith to adorn with notes the works of such authors when—whom he admired no one more. I think that is almost . . . . Yes?

Student: He does even more, I think . . . their position vis-à-vis his Catholicism. Even Plato—

LS: Yes, but let me complete it. I just read it through very superficially now, a bit more alert than I was . . . and this is the most manifest statement. A few more. 167, in the second paragraph when he says, "[He] discovers new historical principles of philosophy."

Mr. Reinken: "He discovers new historical principles of philosophy, and first of all a metaphysics of the human race. That is to say, a natural theology of all nations by which each people, naturally created by itself its own gods, through a certain natural instinct that man has for divinity." (*Autobiography*, 167)

LS: An amazing change in the meaning of natural theology. Natural theology is a rational teaching of God, and here the theology is natural in an entirely different sense because of its genesis in laws. You remember the distinction which, Mr. Emmert—it is natural only by virtue of its genesis, it has nothing to do with its truth. The ordinary meaning of natural theology is of course that it is a true teaching. Yes. 172.

Mr. Reinken:

> The pagan nations, however, by the sole guidance of divine providence, underwent with constant uniformity the successive variations of three kinds of laws corresponding to the three ages and languages of the Egyptians. The first law was divine, under the government of the true God among the Hebrews, and of various false gods among the gentiles. The second was heroic, or peculiar to the heroes who stood midway between gods and men. The third was human, or peculiar to human nature as fully developed and recognized as alike in all men. Not until this last law already holds sway is it possible for philosophers to arise among from the nations and perfect it by reasoning from the maxims of an eternal truth[x]. (*Autobiography*, 172)

LS: Yes, this is a very brief statement of something which we have[62] read very often much more . . . . But when you read his simple statement here it implies that there is no heroic and human law among the Jews and Christians because there is always . . . . And needless to say,[63] philosophy [also] doesn't have a place there; the law arises from the human stage, the human [stage] of the pagan or gentile nations. [64]In the light of what I have seen in Vico, this little story—which seems to be due to his great concern with his strictly private affairs, at the beginning of the condemnation, [on the] next page, of the fact that he had formed a friendship with a Jew, Attias—I think has a somewhat greater meaning than it otherwise would have. 196. I do not know what I meant by that. No, I have only marked the beginning of the second paragraph. [65]This is a letter—yes, Vico thanked him, Don Francesco Spinelli, for his kindness in

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[ix] Strauss may misspeak here. See the discussion in session 3 on these same pages in the *Autobiography*.

[x] In Bergin and Fisch translation: "an eternal justice"

the following letter, by which he justly invited other learned men to do the same because . . . . Now let us read the beginning of the paragraph on page 196.

Mr. Reinken:

> The first is on page 313, line 19. Here in my version Briseis belongs to Agamemnon and Chryseis to Achilles. Agamemnon has demanded that Chryseis be restored to Chryses, her father, priest of Apollo, who on her account has been wreaking havoc upon the Greeks with his pestilence, and Achilles has not consented to obey him in this. Now this episode is told by Homer in quite a different fashion. But this error into which I fell was in fact an unconscious emendation of Homer, in the most important matter of morality. (*Autobiography*, 196)

LS: Ya, that is interesting, you know, because of the fact that *many* of his facts are really wrong. Now of course it can be an unconscious emendation in some cases—well, it can also be an unconscious perversion, but in many cases it can of course be a conscious improvement because the stories and the reports are not reliable. In other words, I would not simply trace these things to errors of memory; I mean, that would not be sufficient, surely . . . . There is also another point on page 197, beginning of the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "The second error is on page 314, line 38 to page 315—"

LS: He can be very precise [LS laughs].

Mr. Reinken:

> Here you have called my attention to the fact that the Manlius who defended the fortress of the Capitoline against the Gauls was called Capitolinus, and after him came the other Manlius with the cognomen Torquatus who had his son beheaded. It was the former and not the latter who, by his efforts to introduce a new reckoning in favor of the debt-ridden plebs, made the nobles suspect that he was trying to make himself tyrant of Rome by popular favor, and so was condemned and hurled from the Tarpeian rock. This lapse of memory was harmful to us in that it deprived us of this powerful proof of the uniformity of the aristocratic state of ancient Rome and Sparta: in the latter too the valorous and great-souled King Agis, a Spartan Capitolinus, because of a similar debt-canceling law (rather than for an agrarian law) and because of another testamentary law, was executed by the ephors. (*Autobiography*, 197)

LS: Ya. Well, I think the most striking thing is his . . . on page 155, which I think, when one—yes, but what does he mean? I have read this before more than once and it didn't make any impression, and now when I read that statement I must say that it is quite extraordinary. But I suppose one can always have the simple way out, which in many cases is probably correct, is plainly that . . . . What struck me first . . . was his extraordinary . . . and his gratitude for every little bit of . . . [laughter]. There is no idolatry worthy of a man like Vico, but then Mr. Reinken saw that this has another side. I mean, a kind child-like gratitude is of course . . . but for a grown-up man it is also . . . .

Now are there any other points that you would like to discuss in these[66] few minutes?

For me this was really an amazing experience. I will tell you why I originally thought of it . . . . I have certain notions about Homer which are unsayable for the time being and that . . . which have been suggested to me by some passages in Plato and Xenophon. And then I saw in an eighteenth-century author—Lessing, a German—some remarks concerning . . . . And then I observed Vico had written a part of his book called "The Discovery of the True Homer," and therefore I expected to find something of this kind in Vico. This was the reason why I was originally interested in Vico, and this of course was barking up the wrong tree entirely [laughter] because Vico has nothing to do with this kind of thing. But on the other hand, it was a great surprise to me when I started it. Impressive, really.

And I would say—yes, one thing I learned independent of all the refinements and where the ruling interpretation (the greatest example is of course Croce) is surely wrong: Vico is not a Romantic. That I think is perfectly clear. His tastes are much more classicist, as you see from his statements about the New Comedy and this kind of thing, and . . . . There's no longing for the beauties of the early age. The relative attitude he has to these barbarians is that without their particular kinds of savagery, nothing better could have been done. But this is not Romantic; there's no longing. And also what I noted in Vico is his whole perception of democracy. . . .

Is there any point you would like to bring up?

Student: Earlier you had mentioned . . . .

LS: Yes, and Montesquieu also. This is generally known, by the way, and it is not impossible that there was some influence. Montesquieu was in Italy, and Rousseau too. But all these things come out very differently in Montesquieu and in Rousseau. But what was the precise point which you mentioned?

Student: . . . struck me that there were strong parallels, and I was just wondering . . . .

LS: No, no; there is something. But in Rousseau, I mean . . . . In Rousseau there is of course at first glance this "quote Romantic thing," the longing for pre-civilized man.

Student: I don't mean that. . . . the question of the development of the general will. Even I felt that in the last chapter of Vico . . . similarities in his comments on the . . . ages of barbarism and the last chapter of Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

LS: In the last chapter, you mean. Yes, I mean if I understand it . . . reality in Rousseau. That one has to think of him in particular.

Student: . . . .

LS: But that is an old story when Plato, in the *Republic*, the philosophers rule. And then in the sequel to the *Republic*, in the *Timaeus*, when the Egyptian order is described, and . . . interlocutor

Critias believes it's the same. And in the Egyptian order, the place of the philosopher is taken by priests. Now I think this is meant by Plato to make clear that the rule of philosophers is not the rule of priests, and this in a way is an alternative. So this I think is an old story.

Student: . . . says that the king of England . . . is in reality dominated by the Church.

LS: Oh, I see, yes. But this does not go on so clearly in Vico, then it comes out in Rousseau—

Student: I agree . . . .

LS: Ya, sure. I think that is . . . . But one thing which on first glance is striking is of course the historical character of the presentation in Rousseau, especially in the *Second Discourse*, you know, which is based on Lucretius. But there's this difference: Rousseau describes a single process, a single process from the earliest barbarism, beast-like barbarism, up to the absolute monarchy of his time. And here you have . . . . But loosely and generally stated, it is true that in writers like Vico, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, history becomes at first glance more important than it was . . . than it was before. I mean, Rousseau speaks of a history of man in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, and here we have a kind of transformation of natural right into a history, ideal history. And in Montesquieu it is in another way very clear in the last four Books . . . surely that is true. Mr. Butterworth?

Mr. Butterworth: . . . is there any way that we could come to an appreciation . . . Vico's argument . . . that because of the argument that he makes for divine providence directing human affairs, anything that is or has been can be said to have been caused by divine providence.

LS: Well, that can be said, I think, very well, [can] be said piously. The question is only how Vico meant it. I mean . . . permission of divine providence according to the orthodox view.[67] But of course in Vico it is different; it is not merely as it were grudgingly permitted so that men can be free. But it is positively . . . without having . . . men would never have come out of that original morass, you know? So in other words, from the religious point of view whatever is good can be said in one sense, but in Vico it is said univocally, so to speak—

Mr. Butterworth: Yes, but is my understanding correct that if we were to have Vico here to discuss it, whatever argument you could put up saying that this surely wouldn't be divine providence, he would come back and say, yes, yes it was divine providence?

LS: Yes, surely, because the whole chapter is very complicated. But what he does, that is true not only of Vico but [also of] quite a few of the writers of the seventeenth, eighteenth century, is an enormous simplification. And therefore the problem of idolatry and . . . doesn't occur. A sheer blessing. Not a blessing in disguise, but compared with what the alternative would be a sheer blessing. You know? That is the point. Because, no, men were—of course he uses . . . men . . . reduced to the state of beasts. And since—I mean, how could they get out of that state of beasts in a natural manner? And the natural manner is what he shows. And formally this is no denial of biblical doctrine but an admission of it. . . . But the strange thing is that if you devote so much attention—I mean, after all, if . . . . Still, it's something which one cannot altogether disregard. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Miller: . . . Indeed, God could have come into the world very shortly after the Fall—

LS: Yes, but it's very simple: as the Prophet says, his ways are not our ways. And only when a man claims that he knows the ways of God, then he—

[end of tape]

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[1] Deleted "to read—."
[2] Deleted "chapter—."
[3] Deleted "And therefore—."
[4] Deleted "two rules—."
[5] Deleted "But this—."
[6] Deleted "and the question."
[7] Deleted "Here—."
[8] Deleted "out of which—."
[9] Deleted "This—."
[10] Deleted "There are some—I mean."
[11] Deleted "which is not—."
[12] Deleted "why."
[13] Deleted "whether."
[14] Deleted "how."
[15] Deleted "mentions—."
[16] Deleted "this is—I mean."
[17] Deleted "there were really—."
[18] Deleted "There is no—."
[19] Moved "only."
[20] Deleted "this situation—."
[21] Deleted "I do not remember that he—."
[22] Deleted "they are all."
[23] Deleted "1071."
[24] Deleted "I mean who—which—."
[25] Deleted "for Mach—."
[26] Deleted "Machiavelli."
[27] Deleted "there were."
[28] Deleted "men must have begun."
[29] Deleted "follows—That."
[30] Deleted "Because—."
[31] Deleted "were poets.'
[32] Deleted "But here—."
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[34] Deleted "with."
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[36] Deleted "This—."
[37] Deleted "the federal state as a peak—."
[38] Deleted "I think we do not have to."
[39] Deleted "In paragraph—Good. So this is—."
[40] Deleted "him."
[41] Deleted "we cannot read that."
[42] Deleted "Now what he is—."
[43] Deleted "the."
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[46] Deleted "—they."
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[48] Deleted "and still and yet."
[49] Deleted "strength."
[50] Deleted "which."
[51] Deleted: "Mr. Reinken: 1107? LS: Yes."
[52] Deleted "through."
[53] Deleted "discussed—."
[54] Deleted "but."
[55] Deleted "Mr. Reinken: [Inaudible] LS: Pardon?"
[56] Deleted "I mean."
[57] Deleted "of the end."
[58] Deleted "LS: Pardon? Student: [Inaudible words]"
[59] Deleted "There is—."
[60] Deleted "This is not—I mean we have seen—."
[61] Moved "here."
[62] Deleted "heard."
[63] Moved "also."
[64] Deleted "And this I think."
[65] Deleted "This—what is that?"
[66] Moved "more."
[67] Deleted "And—."